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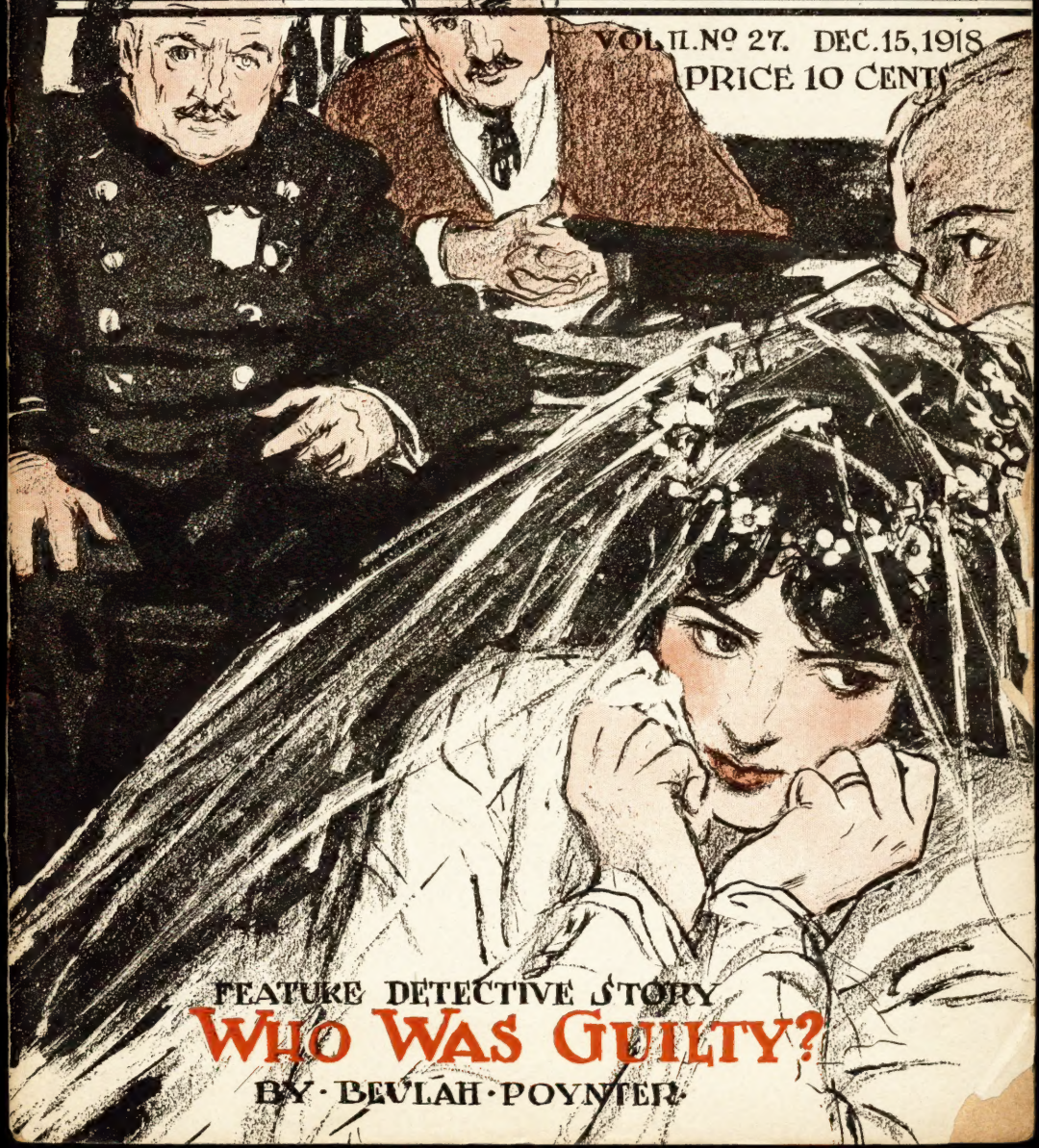

FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

WHO WAS GUILTY?

BY · BEULAH · POYNTER ·

Read "THE EVIL EYE," a Mysterious Detective Story, in Our Next Number

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. II DECEMBER 15, 1918 No. 27

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WHO WAS GUILTY?

A POWERFULLY DRAMATIC DETECTIVE STORY

By BEULAH POYNTER

CHAPTER ONE

As the minister pronounced the final words which made John Clay and Doris Davidger man and wife, the bride's mother swayed, choked and for an instant seemed to lose possession of herself. Then with a smile she regained her composure and joined the assembled guests.

The little bride was about to be crushed with well-wishers. As she stood in the midst of the admiring throng of schoolgirl friends and acquaintances she reminded one very much of the flowers she carried and which were banked about the long, broad room. The bridegroom, a slim, unusual-looking young man, rather foreign in appearance, possibly because of the extreme black of his hair and eyes, and ivory skin, stood beside her smiling in embarrassment, as he acknowledged the congratulations bestowed upon him.

Mrs. Davidger reached her daughter's side and for one moment held the girl's quivering, sensitive form in her arms, as she kissed the trembling lips and murmured: "God make you happy, dear." Then with an almost imperceptible gesture toward the groom, whose dark eyes never left her face, she moved aside and he followed her.

Mark Clevering, standing at the extreme end of the room, an onlooker outside of the throng, saw the bride's mother leave the room through the huge pillared hallway and the bridegroom follow her.

All through the ceremony he had noted Mrs. Davidger's extreme pallor and constrained manner. He knew mothers were often given to weeping at the weddings of an only child—sometimes were known to have hysterics—but Mrs. Davidger's eyes were dry, inscrutable in expression, and although she had carried herself well, the man who knew her so well felt she was acting a part. This puzzled him—as the groom was well loved by the girl's parents, and had been a guest in their home for some time.

In fact, ever since he had first appeared in the exclusive circle of which Marie Davidger was leader he had been their constant companion. Handsome, cultured, obviously of good family—talented and keen of wit—he had become deservedly popular in a short space of time, although no one knew anything of his antecedents. Mrs. Davidger had vouched for his character, and as the wife of a prominent business man and of social standing, that was enough. When her daughter Doris returned from boarding-school and the young people were thrown together, the thing all expected took place. They became engaged, to the delight of every one except Mark Clevering, who took no pains to hide his chagrin and displeasure.

He was Mr. Davidger's attorney, and had loved Doris from boyhood with a deep and sincere affection, which the girl had seemed to reciprocate. She was a flower-like little thing with deep brown eyes, peaches-and-cream complexion and masses of gold-brown hair. An affectionate but teasing little minx. Her teasing propensities had developed when in school ,and on her return her desire to torment the quiet young man who adored her had caused her to flirt outrageously with the young musician whose entrée in society had been brought about by her mother.

Clevering had objected strenuously to the flirtation, his objections but adding fuel to the flames. There was a quarrel, followed by the announcement of Doris' engagement to John Clay. Before Clevering could realize that he had lost the girl he so tenderly loved she was being married to the other man.

Now it was over, and Doris was dressing to go away with this man who had taken her from him.

A hot rage surged over him and he clinched his fists unconsciously as he saw the bridegroom return from the hall after having a brief conversation with his new mother-in-law—a conversation evidently displeasing from the expression on his handsome face, although a smile almost immediately displaced it. Then Clevering heard him say in a laughing voice:

"I'm sorry I must leave you so soon, but I must be excused, old dears; the car will soon be here, and we must off with our glad rags and into our traveling togs. See you later!" Waving his hand to his friends he sprinted up the long stairway which led to his apartment, with the agility which had made him so splendid a dancer.

A cynical smile curved the thin lips of Clevering. Mrs. Davidger had insisted on his presence at the wedding, but he had not joined the others in congratulations, for the hurt he had received was too deep for any mock sentiment.

A timid touch on his arm caused him to turn abruptly, and he found the little bride standing by his side—her piquant face, with the clouds of dark hair framing her features, and shadowed by the filmy veil, raised to his. Her misty dark eyes lifted pleadingly as she extended her hand.

"Mark," she said, "aren't you going to wish me happiness?"

Looking down at her from his height of over six feet, Clevering realized as never before how fragile she was—how ethereal her beauty and how infinitely dear she was to him. With an effort he squared his shoulders and replied in a husky voice:

"Of course, Doris, you know I wish you all the happiness in the world!"

"Not the accent on the you, Mark," she whispered. "Please."

"You are asking too much that I wish him happiness," he said softly. "He will have it without my desiring it for him, for he has won you! Oh, Doris, how could you marry him?"

"Hush!" she admonished. "Some one will hear you. You mustn't now——"

He leaned toward her, his keen gray eyes searching into the depths of her brown ones, and he read for an instant the thing he desired most to know.

"You don't love him!" he cried, a mixture of despair and exultation in his voice. "You have married him, but you don't love him!"

"I do—I do!" she cried angrily, her small face flushing.

"You don't," he retorted.

His smile irritated her. She stamped her whiteshod foot like a petulant child, while angry tears gathered in her eyes.

"He is my husband, and I love him."

A soft-footed servant stepping to her side endeavored to attract her attention.

"Mrs. Clay," he said. The girl did not heed him. "Mrs. Clay," he repeated. She started, blushed painfully and laughed.

"I didn't recognize my new name. What is it, Lawrence?"

"Your mother said you had best dress; the car is waiting."

Murmuring an apology at leaving him so abruptly, she darted from the room, a streak of shimmery, glistening white, in her billowy wedding gown.

Clevering watched her until she vanished up the stairs, a lump in his throat. Then he joined the assembled guests, who were admiring the bride's wedding gifts, discussing her trousseau or commenting on her future happiness.

As he did so he heard a young society matron make a remark concerning himself and the bride.

"They were engaged, you know, and I think her father favored the match, for Clevering is his attorney. Poor chap, I think he is cut up about losing her."

Clevering's dark brows met in a scowl, he realized that everywhere he would be an object of interest until the wedding ceased to be of moment. However, he laughed good-naturedly to show the little gossip he had unconsciously eavesdropped and joined in the chatter.

Suddenly a woman's horrified scream startled the occupants of the room into silence. For an instant no one moved, but stood looking at each other in consternation. Then a second piercing scream came from the floor above. With one accord the guests burst into the hall which led to the wide stairway and the apartments above.

Mark Clevering almost collided with Mrs. Davidger as they met face to face at the foot of the stairs. The unutterable despair in the face she turned to him made him hesitate before he followed the other up the stairway.

"Are you going to faint?" he asked hastily, for she swayed unsteadily and caught at the balustrade for support.

"No; oh, no!" she said, a queer twisted smile creeping about her mouth, then suddenly she sank, a crumpled heap of mauve satin and lace, at his feet.

Before the bewildered man could attract some one's attention and secure assistance for the fainting woman there came a cry from the landing above. Some one had opened the door of the room from whence the scream had come, and now called out:

"John Clay has been murdered!" Clevering looked at the woman lying at his feet, then up the stairs at the horrified crowd of gorgeously clad women and men. Then throwing aside the bewildering lethargy which seemed to envelop him, he sprang up the flight of stairs and into the room where the tragedy had taken place. He was not lacking in sympathy for the stricken mother, but he felt that Doris had need of his presence. All her life, until this other man had stolen her from him, she had turned to him for assistance and guidance.

The door leading into Clay's apartment was open, and the guests had grouped themselves about the room and the doorway. For the most part they stood in awed silence as they looked upon the wreckage which had taken place.

Stretched upon his back in the center of the room was the body of the bridegroom, the white expanse of his shirt front rapidly becoming stained by the steady trickle of red which flowed from a wound close to his heart. He had removed his coat and was evidently in the act of dressing again when death had overtaken him—for his traveling garments were flung across a chair near by and he was in his stocking feet. The room was in a state of disorder, totally at variance with its owner's usual habits. It looked as if a struggle had taken place or some one in a frenzy of anger had flung garments right and

left and strewn the contents of a waste-paper basket about the room. The clothing had been torn from the bed and flung in a heap beside it. Cigars were scattered everywhere. Torn scraps of paper littered the floor. To add to the confusion a girl—a slip of a débutante—was sobbing hysterically, while a young matron kept demanding wildly that some one send for the police.

When Clevering appeared upon the scene the onlookers separated and allowed him to step into the center of the room where the cold, silent figure of the dead man lay. But Clevering merely glanced at Clay, it was the rigid, horrified young wife who drew his attention. She was standing near the body, still in the bridal veil she had worn scarcely an hour before when she had promised to love, honor and obey him until death—death which had overtaken him so soon and so ruthlessly. She stood like a slim white statue, her great dark eyes glazed and staring, not at the dead man, but at some unseen object—some terrible soul, horrifying vision. Her soft white wedding gown was crumpled and disheveled as though she had taken part in a mighty struggle, and on the front panel of sheer feathery lace were scarlet drops—stains which could be nothing but blood.

"It was she who screamed," said one woman a bit calmer than the others. "She was here alone with him when we came."

"Doris!" said Clevering, crossing quickly to her. "Doris, dear!"

She gave a long, shuddering sigh, seemed to draw herself from a nightmare which was crushing her, and with a sob like that of a frightened child she turned to him, stretching out slim white hands which he took in a reassuring grasp.

"Mark——!" she moaned. "Mark—he's dead! I saw—oh, my God!"

"Hush!" said the young man quickly, his instinct bidding him silence her before she said something which would incriminate her. Too well he knew that the muffled whispers of the guests boded no good for the little bride.

"Where's her mother?" said Mrs. Lansing, the young society matron. "She should be here with her."

Clevering then remembered the woman in the dead swoon in the hallway below. "Some one go to her!" he exclaimed abruptly. "Mrs. Davidger has fainted. She is at the foot of the stairs."

There was a startled exclamation as he imparted this news, and a young man abruptly left the room.

Mark Clevering led the little wife to an open window, and drawing aside the curtains that the breeze could better play upon her face, he gently pushed her into an armchair, admonishing her to be brave and to be silent.

"Has any one notified the police?" he asked, turning to the guests. No one seemed to know. "Who found the body?" the young lawyer continued. A silence pervaded the room, then Doris answered in a strangely calm voice:

"I did, the revolver was there beside him, it was smoking. I screamed. I had to scream twice before any one came."

As no one seemed inclined to take the initiative—seeming to rely upon Clevering because of his profession—he stepped to a telephone and called up police headquarters.

"Hello! Police headquarters! This is Mark Clevering, attorney, speaking. Send some one to No. — Park avenue immediately—Colonel Davidger's—an accident, yes—it may be suicide or murder—it looks like murder!"

"Suicide!" gasped Mrs. Lansing. "Do you think Mr. Clay committed suicide?"

The young lawyer glanced at her over his shoulder, an inscrutable expression in his clean-cut, dark face, but he did not reply. Doris gave a low wail and buried her face in her hands.

"Where is Mr. Davidger?" exclaimed one of the group. "I haven't seen her father."

"He is here," said a quiet, but authoritive voice, as a portly middle-aged gentleman stepped near the dead man. He was very pale, and a perceptible shudder shook his heavy frame as he looked at the quivering, grief-shaken figure of his daughter. "I came in a few moments ago," he added, then, with a sudden burst of pent-up excitement, he exclaimed: "My God! Is there nothing to be done? Are we going to allow him to lie there weltering in his blood, to die for want of attention?"

"He is dead now, Mr. Davidger," replied an elderly gentleman, whom evening clothes did not rob him of his professional appearance and manner. "He was dead when Miss Da—I mean Mrs. Clay—called us into the room. I examined him immediately."

"Doctor Morris is correct," said Mrs. Lansing.

"Oh, daddy! Daddy!" sobbed the bride, but her father stood silently staring at the tragedy, while Mark Clevering returned to her side.

"Isn't it terrible?" cried a young girl hysterically. "Why, they were getting ready to go on their wedding journey, and now he is dead and she——"

The loud clang of a patrol wagon announced the arrival of the police. Before any one could leave the room Clevering held up a hand, saying: "Remain here, all of you, please.

"I'd rather not!" exclaimed Mrs. Lansing.

"It is necessary. Please do not argue," he answered. With a sigh the matron dropped into the nearest chair.

CHAPTER TWO

MRS. DAVIDGER struggled to a sitting posture before assistance reached her, but sinking on the lower stair she leaned against the balustrade and strove to bring her benumbed senses back to a normal basis. Her dark eyes, very like those of her daughter Doris', held a world of tragedy in their depths, and her beautiful still youthful face was pallid beyond conception. She gratefully accepted the glass of wine which was extended toward her, and drinking it at a swallow once more regained her feet.

"Where—what happened?" she asked faintly of the young man who had come to her side at Clevering's admonition. Stephen Westly endeavored to tell her the facts of the case as far as he knew them. She followed his recital with cold, rigid attention, her bloodless lips set in a thin line, her smoldering eyes staring into his.

"Dead!" she murmured. "John Clay—dead! Where is Doris?"

"She found him," admitted Westly grudgingly. "It was Doris who screamed."

"Poor child," said her mother. "I must go to her; how stupid of me to faint. I've not been well the last two weeks; the strain of her wedding preparations was very great—then the screams—it was too much for me." She smiled faintly as she apologized, and the light in her face gave it an almost unearthly beauty.

When she reached the room above, the police had preceded her, having entered the house through another doorway and gone up the tiny elevator.

The police inspector had brought a physician with him, and he corroborated Doctor Morris' statement that John Clay had been dead some little time—easily three-quarters of an hour. The death had obviously been caused by a bullet wound. Whether self-inflicted they had yet to determine, for the revolver lay within reach of the dead man's right hand, and the wound was over his left breast. There were powder stains on the bosom of his shirt which would indicate the shot had been fired at close quarters. His face, which had been an exceedingly handsome one in life, bore an expression of unutterable loathing, fear and something indescribable.

The thought of suicide seemed out of the question, for the young man had had everything to live for—an enviable position through his marriage with Colonel Davidger's beautiful daughter, health and unlimited means.

Clevering noticed Mrs. Davidger's entrance into the room, and a flood of bitter memories caused him for a moment to lose the sympathy her obvious suffering should bring forth. Only too well he recalled the unsavory

stories regarding young Clay which had led him to make an investigation of the man's previous character. The result he had taken to Marie Davidger before the engagement was announced, but she had repudiated it with a wave of her white hand and that queer twisted smile of hers. The fear that perhaps on the very threshold of her new life Doris had also learned the truth regarding the man she had married, and had killed him rather than give herself to him, gripped him like a knife. The thought stifled him and he strove to banish it, lest in thinking it he would import the same idea to the detectives. He had instantly noted the spots of blood on Doris' gown, and knowing the deceased's past as he did, he could not find it in his heart to blame her if she had killed him. Yet looking at her, small, fragile, a child in years and innocence, it was impossible to associate her with crime.

A feeling of intense pity surged over him; he forgot all she had caused him to suffer; he wanted to take her in his man's arms and run away with her—to protect her against the scandalmongers and gossips who would delight in tearing her fair name to shreds. He laid a caressing hand on the gold-brown head for the ghost of a second, then realizing that his very attitude of devotion in itself was injurious to the girl, he took it away.

Doris did not seem conscious of his presence. After her first bitter sobbing she had sat cold and still in the big arm-chair. The dark-green velour in which it was upholstered actentuating her pallor, not once did she move until her mother entered the room, then she started to her feet as though to cry out, but seeming to gain control of herself she crushed her hand against her lips and sank back in the chair.

Mrs. Davidger, who had strangely gained her composure, crossed immediately to her daughter's side, and although Clevering drew a chair up for her, she refused and stood leaning against the arm of the girl's chair.

Clevering noticed the convulsive shiver that shook her frame when she first saw the dead man and how she averted her eyes always afterward.

The occupants of the room listened in awed silence to the inspector's questioning, with the exception of Doris all practically saying the same thing—namely, that with the conclusion of the marriage ceremony Doris had slipped away to dress for her wedding journey, and that a few minutes later, after exchanging good-natured badinage with old friends, the bridegroom had likewise left the room to prepare for the trip. Doris had refused the assistance of any of the bridesmaids and gone alone.

That she had made no attempt to change her gown was evidenced by the fact that she still wore her bridal veil and wreath.

On being questioned, Doris answered in a clear, low voice, distinctly audible to all in the long room:

"You found your husband's body lying as it is now, you say?" said the inspector.

"Yes, sir."

"How is it you did not change your gown as you intended when you left your guests?"

"I went to my room to do so," she replied, "but on passing the library I heard angry voices."

"Angry voices—men's voices?"

"No, sir—that is—a man's and a woman's——"

"Did you recognize them?"

"Yes, sir. They were those of my husband and my mother."

"How could that be when you left your husband downstairs?" said the inspector.

For a second she hesitated, then said: "I went to my boudoir first, but I wanted to——" A scarlet flush for a moment overspread her face. "I returned to the library because I wanted a picture there."

"This was Mr. Clay's private apartment?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, sir. He has used this room every day since he became my parents' guest."

"Where is the library?"

"Just opposite to this room, facing the stairs," she replied wearily. "I went back to get the picture, but nearing the door I heard voices. I thought they were John's and my mother's, but was uncertain. It did not seem possible that mother had left her guests downstairs, and I knew John should be dressing."

"Did you hear what they were saying?"

"No—no!" The hesitancy with which she answered made it palpable she was lying, but the inspector did not repeat the question, but inquired:

"You are certain the voices you heard came from the library and not this room?"

"Yes, sir," she answered quickly, obviously telling the truth.

"But you did not go in the library. Why not?"

"Because I did not want John—my husband—to know I wished to take the picture with me. It was a photograph of a very old and dear friend of whom he had been jealous."

"You quarreled over this friend?" asked the inspector dryly.

"Oh, no, we never quarreled," she said quickly.

"You are sure you didn't go in the room and, quarreling over that picture, shoot your husband?" he said abruptly, the cruelty of his voice lashing the delicate woman like a whip.

"How dare you!" she cried, starting to her feet, her eyes flashing, her nostrils quivering like those of a high-bred horse. "Are you accusing me of—— Oh!"

"You did not go in the room?" continued the inspector, paying no heed to her indignation.

"I never again saw my husband alive," said the girl, dropping back in the chair. She strove to gain control over herself, but her chin quivered painfully and the hands that gripped the arms of the chair showed how tense she was.

"What did you do if you did not go in the room at the time?" said the inspector, his keen gray eyes searching the girl's pallid face. For a moment Clevering had an intense desire to pounce upon him and throttle him for tormenting her, then something about his attitude told him that although his words seemed to accuse her, he did not believe her guilty.

"I went back to my own room," Doris answered, "but I was worried. I don't know why—I just was. I couldn't stay there. I felt everything was not as it should be. It was not like mother and John to quarrel; they were fond of each other. Then again I couldn't believe it was mother; she wouldn't leave the guests, and I couldn't imagine why any other woman should be with John at such a time when he should be dressing."

"You are positive it was a woman's voice you heard?"

"Oh, yes."

"Go on."

"I started down the hall again——"

"Where is your room?"

"At the extreme end of the hall, and just as I reached the library door I heard a shot fired——" she shuddered and closed her eyes for a second.

Did the sound come from this apartment?" said the inspector quickly.

"I—I don't know."

"Then why did you come here instead of the library?"

"My first thought was of my husband. The library door was open, so I ran here. I think I screamed—I don't know. I opened the door. John was lying on the floor—just as he is now. There was blood on his chest. I screamed again and ran to him—I knelt down beside him and felt his face; it was still warm. I cried for help; as I—I did so my hand touched a revolver—it was beside him."

"There was no one in the room?"

"No one," she replied. "See?" she added wearily. "His blood on my wedding gown! Oh, God! Why did he kill himself?"

"Why do you think he did?" asked Inspector McKay quickly. He had lifted up the revolver she indicated and, after glancing over it, handed it to Detective Rogers. Doris looked at her questioner fearlessly.

"He was alone," she said. "I entered the room immediately after the shot was fired; no one but John himself could have done it."

"Do you think the quarrel he had with your mother——"

"I didn't say it was my mother," Doris interrupted quickly. "The voice sounded like hers, was what I said."

"Do you think this quarrel had anything to do with the death?"

Clevering leaned forward eagerly. He dreaded the girl's reply; that she was hiding something he was certain, and anything she could say would tend to injure, not aid, her; she simply replied in the negative with a shake of her head.

"But you didn't hear what was said," said McKay. "Why are you so positive?"

For a moment her chin quivered, then she flung back her head bravely.

"I can't answer any more questions now. I've told you all I know," she said.

McKay turned to question Mrs. Davidger, but as he did so Rogers drew him aside to call his attention to some finger-prints on the handle of the automatic which he had been examining.

"The girl's," he said under his breath. "See if they aren't." As if sensing the trend of their conversation, Doris said quickly:

"I lifted the revolver, then put it down again."

"Where was it when you found it?" said McKay, but there was a steelier ring in his voice than before, and the young lawyer's heart sank as he realized the ordeal ahead of the girl.

"Just where you found it," she answered.

"Now, Mrs. Davidger," said the inspector, turning to the older woman who during her daughter's cross-examining had stood as if carved out of marble, her beautiful cold face expressionless, her dark eyes never leaving his face. "Your daughter says she thinks she heard your voice mingled with that of her husband's; were you here in the room with him at the time?"

"No," said the woman, barely breathing the words; she swayed a trifle and, as her hand came into contact with the girl's, Doris gave a little cry, almost of accusation. "Oh, mother!"

Clevering spoke up. "Mrs. Davidger was downstairs all the time. I can vouch for that—at the time Doris screamed she was in a swoon at the foot of the stairs."

The curious spectators watching the face of the older woman saw an inscrutable smile flash over it, to be immediately followed by a look of blank despair. As Clevering spoke he seemed to address her rather than the detective, and subconsciously he noted that in the past hour she seemed to have aged as though years had rolled over her head. It was not that the straight, slim figure, almost girlish in lines, was held any the less youthfully, or that the small, well-poised head was less regal, but youth itself seemed to have died in the woman, who up until the present had seemed too young to be the mother of a grown daughter. The gleam in her dark, beautiful eyes was like that of a dying flame, her pallor was that of age, even her smooth, dark hair seemed lifeless.

"Were you downstairs all the time after your daughter's marriage?" continued the inspector.

For the fraction of a second she hesitated.

"Yes," she replied. Her eyes met his unflinchingly, but Clevering, looking from her to the inspector, saw her husband staring at her in a way which puzzled him, then like a thunderbolt from above he remembered that for a short time almost succeeding the wedding Mrs. Davidger had not been in the room where her guests were.

Doris had been certain it was her mother's voice she had heard, though she had tried to convince herself it was not. Unconsciously a groan escaped him. His heart ached for the little bride in her double sorrow. Hoping against hope that no further examination would prove the falsity of Mrs. Davidger's statements, he listened eagerly as McKay questioned them all. Most of the guests were too excited to recall whether Mrs. Davidger were present or not all during the evening, though of course they knew she was there during the ceremony. The screams and finding Doris alone with the dead man were the only things they all agreed upon.

The inspector then sent for the servants.

CHAPTER THREE

THE servants who had been within listening distance in the hallway answered the inspector's call almost eagerly, a morbid curiosity dominating any fear. There were six of them besides Lawrence, the cook, a first and second maid, the chauffeur, Mrs. Davidger's and Doris' personal maids and a French valet, Armonde by name, devoted to John Clay's service.

McKay looked them over carefully, then he called Rogers to his side, and instructing him to see that nothing was disturbed in the apartment, and to remain with the body, he requested that the immediate family, Clevering and the servants step into the library, and that the guests go below to await further orders until the servants were questioned.

There was some grumbling at this among the guests, as every one was eager to hear all details of the gruesome tragedy; but, led by Sergeant Moran, they went downstairs.

A hush had fallen over the entire crowd, and although conversations were carried on, they were done in whispers.

"Will we be accused?" asked the little débutante as they entered the long room hung with festoons of flowers.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Lansing, her nerves strung to a snapping point. "They don't accuse people without reason. Use a little judgment, Sue!"

"Who do you think did it?" Sue continued, irrepressible in her curiosity.

The older woman looked at the girl, sarcasm written all over her face. She shrugged her shoulders and dropped into the nearest chair.

"Well," said Sue mysteriously, "I've an idea Mark Clevering is back of it."

"Sue!"

"Well, I have so!" persisted the girl. "Every one knows that he was simply mad over Doris, and yet he came to the wedding; maybe he hired a gunman to kill John Clay, and——"

"Good gracious, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Lansing, staring at her horrified. "Where do you get such ideas? What kind of literature do you read?"

"Literature!" smiled the girl, snapping her fingers. "If you just keep your eyes open you never need books to become wise. I know a lot of things about John Clay and Mrs. Davidger that mother doesn't, or——"

"Sue!" cried Mrs. Lansing, closing the girl's mouth with her hand. "How can you say such things? It's dreadful!"

The girl snickered knowingly, perking her small blonde head on one side like a preening bird's.

"Well, the things I know are dreadful," she said. "Do you know John Clay was a cabaret dancer when Mrs. Davidger first met him and that he was engaged to his dancing partner—a perfectly terrible creature? And he threw her over when Mrs. Davidger took up with him, and she threatened—I mean the terrible creature—threatened to kill him—and——"

Mrs. Lansing's languid blue eyes rested in amazement on the girl's flushed, malicious little face. For an instant she did not speak, then her curiosity overcame her judgment.

"Where did you hear this?" she inquired.

Sue dropped in a chair, hitching it closer to the others as she did so.

"My brother Bill told me," she whispered. "He knew a girl, an actress, who the dancing creature knew, and she told Bill all about it."

"Well, it's malicious gossip," said the matron with finality, "and I'd advise you not to repeat it, Sue. At such

a time as this you should be very careful what you say. What was the creature's name?"

Sue wrinkled her little white forehead as she studied, then she clapped her hands. "Dalmores—that was it; Daisy or Maisie or something like it. Dalmores—I saw her once and she didn't look a bit wicked, but was gorgeously beautiful."

Mrs. Lansing rose abruptly, shaking the folds of her gown, which clung caressingly to her slim figure. She hesitated as though uncertain what to do.

"Sue Ainslie, if what you tell me is true, then it may be a clue for the detectives to work on."

"You think the creature murdered him?" gasped the girl.

"I don't know; but tell the policeman and see what he says."

Sue drew back unwillingly. It was quite a different thing to gossip with a friend and making a plain statement of facts to an officer of the law. After some urging Mrs. Lansing persuaded her to tell Sergeant Moran what she had said to her, and was disappointed to see how little stock that worthy took in the tale.

Inspector McKay preceded the others into the library, then closed the door after them. Mrs. Davidger sank wearily onto the large divan which stood in the center of the room. The soft glow of a lamp standing on a table behind her cast a shadow on her pale face, but illuminated her blue-black hair.

Doris stood close to Clevering as though seeking his protection. It was a curious fact, which was noted by the lawyer, that neither parent approached the girl. Davidger scarcely seemed to see her, nor his wife, for that matter! His usually ruddy face was pale, and the good nature which had been his chief characteristic had vanished. Clevering himself was on a nervous tension; he longed to know, yet dreaded to hear the result of the examination. He felt the remorse that shook the slight form of the girl beside him, and reaching out he took her cold hand and squeezed it reassuringly. This was noted by McKay, and Clevering flushed as he caught the inspector's eye.

No one spoke for several moments after entering the room. McKay wandered about, taking in all the appointments of the library. It was a long, low, handsome room, done in brown, with massive mahogany furniture, several worth-while paintings and hundreds upon hundreds of books, books which bespoke their owner's good taste in literature. The lamps were all shaded with amber silk and threw a soft, mellow gleam on the faces of the group standing so taut and tense.

One of the parlor maids giggled hysterically and broke the tension. Mrs. Davidger moved uneasily and fixed her dark, brooding eyes on the girl in a manner that made her draw back in terror, for in their depths was a trace of a disordered mind.

Inspector McKay questioned the two maids first, but as they obviously knew nothing beyond having heard Mrs. Clay's screams, he dismissed them with a wave of the hand; likewise the cook, who had only learned of the murder through the others. He questioned the chauffeur next, but as he had been in the machine at the curb during the excitement he had no testimony to give.

As the inspector turned to Mrs. Davidger's maid, Rosalie, a rap was heard on the door. Clevering opened it. Detective Rogers was there and informed them that Doctor Wallis, McKay's medical assistant, had arrived. McKay excused himself, saying he would return presently, and left the room with Rogers. As the door closed after him one of the maids gave a startled exclamation.

"Mrs. Davidger has fainted!"

She had fallen back on the divan and was almost deathlike in appearance. Before she could be restored to consciousness, Doctor Morris, who was below with the guests, had to be summoned. At his demand she was taken to her own room, where she was to lie for some time in a raging fever.

As they carried her from the room, Clevering stooped and picked up a glittering object from the floor, which he had kept covered with his foot from the instant he had entered the room. It was a jeweled ornament for the hair and was the companion pin to the one Mrs. Davidger was wearing.

Inspector McKay returned just as the commotion caused by Mrs. Davidger's faint had subsided. After inquiring the cause he once more turned to the maid Rosalie.

She was a strikingly pretty girl, small, exceedingly dark, lithe and graceful in all her movements. The black gown and white cape she wore, while becoming, gave the impression of an actress playing a part, rather than of one to the service born. Her full red lips were half-parted, and her sloe-black eyes sparkling when the inspector spoke to her. She seemed to be enjoying the excitement keenly and to be anxious to take part in it.

"You are Mrs. Davidger's maid?" he said abruptly.

"Mrs. Davidger's, yes, sir," she replied, but she looked at Doris, not her questioner.

"Your name?"

"Rosalie Dalmores."

"How long have you been in her service?"

The girl hesitated, then replied: "Two years."

"Where were you employed before entering Mrs. Davidger's service?" the detective said, his keen gray eyes searching the girl's self-satisfied countenance.

"I was never in service before," she answered pertly.

"Who recommended you?" continued the inspector. Rosalie ran her tongue over her lips very like a satisfied cat as she watched the sensation her words caused when she said:

"John Clay!"

Doris leaned forward with a quick intake of her breath. Clevering started. Something very like an oath escaped Colonel Davidger.

"John Clay?" repeated her questioner, but when he asked no further questions regarding her recommendation the girl continued as though eager to impress upon her hearers the importance of her position.

"I was a professional dancer before I came here. I danced in several first-class cabarets with John Clay."

"Where he was dining, you mean?" said the inspector.

"Oh, no," she answered. "Professionally. He was my partner. Didn't you know he was a cabaret dancer before she—I mean Mrs. Davidger—took him up? Well, he was, and what's more, we were sweethearts!"

Doris gave a low wail and dropped her head into her hands; her wedding veil, which had become bedraggled during the excitement, fell over her face, shielding it. The maid seemed to enjoy the girl's sorrow, for she smiled maliciously. Though Clevering itched to shake her for her insolent braggadocio manner, he realized that she was supplying a motive for the murder and slipping a noose about her own neck. He was a little surprised when the inspector dismissed the subject of her relation with the deceased and inquired if she had been with her mistress at all during the evening.

"Sure," replied the maid, a hint of coldness in her voice. "I helped her get ready for the ceremony, and, believe me, it wasn't any easy job, either, for she was nervous and I was sore! I leave it to you if it wouldn't make you sore, Cap, to be dressing a woman who was going to the wedding of your sweetheart to another woman?"

"But you and Mr. Clay were no longer sweethearts, were you?" said the inspector.

"No, the dirty piker!" the woman burst forth. "I didn't figure on him marrying the girl. I could put up with the old lady, but when——"

"Please!" cried Doris, raising her hand imploringly.

"You say Mrs. Davidger was nervous," said the inspector. "In what way?"

"Just nervous," answered the maid sullenly. "I can't tell you in what way; I ain't a nerve specialist! She was jumpy, you know, ready to bite your head off, and such like. She sent me once to get John—er, Mr. Clay—to come to her room to see her, but he wouldn't answer my knock—not him."

"Why was that?" asked the inspector.

"He was dressing for the great blow-off, and anyway

he was dodging me. He'd double-crossed me, and he knew I knew it. Mrs. Davidger looked all cut up when I told her he wouldn't see her!"

"When did you see him alive last?" Rosalie studied.

"Not to-day any time," she said.

"You're sure?"

"Of course. Just before the ceremony I went to his door, as Mrs. Davidger asked me to, and knocked, but he just said 'Who's there?' and when I said Rosalie, he wouldn't open the door."

"Didn't you think this strange?" said the inspector. He lighted a match and held it to the stub of a cigar between his teeth.

"No—no," the girl replied, hesitatingly.

"And you never saw him again till he was dead?"

"I haven't seen him dead," she answered flippantly. A hard look crept about her mouth and her black eyes glittered, but she threw her head back defiantly as she faced the inspector.

"You do not seem particularly grieved at his death," he said.

"No, I'm glad!" but she choked, and for one moment seemed to lose her self-possession. "He had it coming to him! I wasn't the only woman he gave a dirty deal. I guess they weren't all as soft as me!"

"Then you admit you had a personal grudge against the dead man?" the inspector asked dryly.

"Sure. Oh, say, now, there ain't no use in your trying to fix his murder on me! That's all rot! I've got an alibi you can't beat!"

McKay dismissed her with no further questioning, and she stepped aside to allow Doris' own personal maid to be questioned. As she did so a fold of her black gown touched the little bride's hand. Doris drew back with loathing as though a snake had touched her. The maid noticed it, and her black eyes glittered balefully.

The other maid, a small, shrinking girl with light blue eyes and straw-colored hair, faced the inspector trembling with dread. He had to assure her several times that she had nothing to fear before she could summon courage to speak, then what she said was of so little consequence McKay dismissed her at once.

But Clevering, who had eagerly followed all the details, felt convinced she was concealing something. The strange look she gave Armonde, John Clay's valet, further confirmed his suspicions.

Armonde stepped forward with an air of self-possession that was decidedly displeasing. He was a good-looking young fellow, but a peculiar squint about his light-blue eyes offset any beauty of feature. But his voice was musical and well modulated when he spoke, and Clevering's dislike for him vanished as his candor and straight-forward manner proclaimed the truth of his statement.

He had been in John Clay's service for almost three years, he said. His name was Henry Wilson, but Mrs. Davidger, who had engaged him for Mr. Clay, had insisted on the French cognomen. Colonel Davidger straightened up suddenly as the valet said this, and purple veins stood out in his forehead. Before the inspector could question the man he blurted out:

"Who paid your salary, John Clay or my wife?"

"Mr. Clay," replied the valet in a surprised tone. "She merely interviewed me for him."

The valet corroborated Rosalie's statement that she had knocked on Mr. Clay's door and asked him to come to Mrs. Davidger. He (Armonde) was in the room at the time and had been surprised at Mr. Clay's curt refusal of the request.

When asked if Mr. Clay had acted in a manner unusual while dressing, Armonde replied that he had been very high-spirited and seemed intensely happy.

"He did so many dance steps I had a hard time to get him dressed," continued the valet. "He kept snapping his fingers and saying 'I've come into my own, old man. What d'ye think of that—I've come into my own. I've waited a long time for it, but it's come at last.' I didn't understand him, for it seemed to me as if he had everything just about as he wanted it then, but he certainly was pleased over something and anxious to get the wedding over."

"He showed no symptoms of a desire to die?" asked McKay.

"Oh, no; no, indeed," said the man. "I never saw any one so full of life or pleased with himself."

Doris' cold hand lying in Clevering's moved uneasily. He felt the convulsive shiver that passed over her every time her husband's name was mentioned.

"You were with him after the ceremony, when he returned to dress?" inquired the inspector.

The valet hesitated. "Yes, sir, I—I was down the corridor a ways with Louise—Mrs. Clay's maid, sir, Louise Day. We're engaged, and she was feeling a bit blue because she was going away with the young couple and I wasn't, so we were going to be separated. I was trying to console her when Mr. Clay comes sprinting up the stairs, two at a time, laughing and calling back to his guests. He called to me to come quickly, as he was in a big hurry. Louise went to Miss Doris'—I mean Mrs. Clay's—room, because she knew she'd be needed, and I obeyed Mr. Clay."

The inspector held up his hand, instructing him to be silent for the present, and motioning his assistant to him, whispered something to him. As he did so Doris turned to Clevering as though to speak, hesitated, then suddenly refrained.

"Go on," said the inspector, but he glanced curiously at the maid Louise. She had started up as Armonde spoke, then had dropped back into her chair, and now sat picking nervously at the folds of her black dress, watching the valet's face with an expression of appeal, almost terror, in her blue eyes. Clevering wondered that the inspector had dismissed her with so little questioning. The girl knew something she was endeavoring to conceal and was in agony for fear her lover would divulge her secret. She was not pretty, but there was a wistful sweetness about her which was very attractive, and despite her attitude of fear toward the valet, Clevering sensed her devotion to him.

Armonde explained that on entering Mr. Clay's room he had assisted him to remove his coat and shoes. As he did so the telephone rang—he had answered it, and a woman's voice had inquired for Mr. Clay. He said he did not recognize the voice, but evidently his master did, for he had been surprised and displeased, and upon hanging up the receiver had requested Armonde to go outside for a little while and to wait until he was called, as a lady was coming to see him.

"Didn't you think this an unusual remark at such a time?" said the inspector.

"Yes, sir, but my master was erratic—and—and popular with women. He seemed terribly annoyed—and—I think a little frightened. I did as he requested and never saw him alive again."

"You did not see this woman enter who announced she was coming?"

"No, sir."

"You admitted no one?" the inspector asked, turning to the maids and the butler. They had no knowledge of any one entering the house after the ceremony had been performed.

"Well, young woman," said the officer, suddenly facing the shrinking maid Louise, "your lover here says you went to your mistress' room when he left you. Mrs. Clay, didn't I understand you to say you were alone in your apartment at the time you heard the shot fired?"

"Yes, sir," Doris replied softly.

"Where were you?" asked the inspector. The girl flushed violently, then grew very pale. Suddenly she burst into tears.

"I was in my own room, sir," she sobbed. "Honest, I was."

"Well, Mrs. Clay, Mr. Davidger"—the officer's glance included every one in the room—"the doctor thinks this is murder—an inquest will be held to determine. For the present you are dismissed."

As they were leaving the room Clevering was arrested

by an exultant triumphant laugh from the maid Rosalie as she passed before Louise into the hallway.

The laugh puzzled Clevering, but before he could determine whether or not to inquire of the girl its cause she had seen his expression and, darting down the hall with the lithe grace of a panther, vanished from view.

CHAPTER FOUR

A SILENCE, thick, heavy and ominous, seemed to have settled upon the household. The guests who were informed that they might depart had done so with little or no commotion. The servants had returned to their quarters, there to discuss the tragedy in awed whispers scarcely audible, as though the walls in reality had ears.

Clevering made ready to go, but was detained by Colonel Davidger himself. The older man was visibly shaken and under a tremendous strain. And well he might be, for Doris, his daughter, seemed stunned and broken by the shock, and after going to her room refused to see any one, while his wife was raving in delirium.

He touched Clevering lightly on the arm just as the lawyer was descending the stairs. Clevering started violently, then laughed at his nervousness. Davidger apologized, adding hastily:

"Don't go, Clevering. Stay the night, can't you? The uncanny atmosphere of the place is getting on my nerves. I'd like to have you here, if it isn't too much to ask of you."

"Of course I'll stay if you want me," Clevering said graciously. He was genuinely fond of the white-haired old man, knowing he had desired the marriage between his daughter and himself, and had felt keenly his disappointment when it was not consummated.

Clevering removed his top-coat and hat and returned to the library with his host. There they sat for some time smoking, though little was said. Davidger seemed to avoid mentioning his wife beyond the fact that she was resting easy and was not to be disturbed. Clevering sensed the relief his client felt in his presence, and the other evidently knew the sympathy extended without any words used to express it. When later the old man yawned and tried to cover it, Clevering sprang to his feet, saying:

"Go to bed, old man, there's where you belong. You'll be a different man in the morning."

Davidger tried to protest that he was not sleepy, but upon Clevering insisting that he himself was tired, he rose laboriously, saying:

"I'll put you up in the room opposite mine on the next floor. We'll not disturb the servants. Come on."

As they stepped into the hallway, dimly lighted and shadowy, Davidger gave a perceptible shudder, and Clevering noticed his side glances toward the room opposite where the dead man lay.

As he did so a cough came from within, and the door opened the barest trifle. Davidger hardly suppressed a shriek, then laughed as the young officer who had remained with the body stepped out of the door and addressed them.

"D'ye mind, sir, if I lie down on the couch in the library and leave the door open? I'm dead tired, and staying awake with a dead one—beg your pardon—with—er—Mr. Clay—ain't the pleasantest task in the world."

"Do as you like," said Davidger. "There's brandy and soda on the table and cigars. Help yourself."

Clevering gave a rapid survey of the young fellow, and remembered him as McKay's assistant, Moran. Moran touched his forelock and, as he turned into the library, said: "I'll keep a sharp lookout. If I do sleep, it will be with one eye open."

Colonel Davidger did not seem to hear him, but preceding his guest, led the way up the stairway to the upper floor, and ushering Clevering into a large, beautifully furnished room, which somehow, despite its tasteful hangings and cozy fire burning in the grate, seemed to partake of the tragedy which had occurred below.

Davidger brought a smoking-jacket and a robe for Clevering, then informing him he was a light sleeper and would answer any call in case he desired to talk with him, bade him good-night and departed.

Clevering stood for some time before the fireplace, ruminating over the events which had taken place. He was certain that Mrs. Davidger had more to do with the murder than either her husband or Doris would dare to admit to themselves; but just how much that was he could not fathom. His heart ached for the entire family. The colonel's almost callous unconcern about his wife's illness puzzled him not a little, though he felt she was perhaps only hysterical, not really ill. Slowly, still pondering over the terrible affair, Clevering removed his garments preparatory to retiring. Despite the fire in the grate the room had become very cold, and he found himself shivering as though with a chill. He threw the heavy robe Davidger had provided about his shoulders and sprang into bed, thinking the heavy covering would allay the tremors which shook him. Instead he found his teeth chattering and his whole body shaking with chills. He remembered a decanter of brandy he had seen on the library table and determined to get it without disturbing his host. So wrapping himself about with a blanket, very like an Indian, he stole out into the dark hall and down the stairs, passing Mrs. Davidger's room to do so. A faint light shone through a crack under the door, but no sound came from within. He concluded if there was a nurse on duty she was asleep by now.

He reached the landing below in safety, though the creaking of the stairs sounded like cannon popping to his listening ears, and he paused as each foot rested on the stair. As he turned the bend in the hall which led to the library, he heard the snores of the young officer who had been stationed there, and he smiled in spite of his discomfort "at the sharp lookout" he was keeping. But as he started to step across the threshold he saw something which made him draw back in dismay, all thoughts of cold banished from his mind.

At the extreme end of the hall was another stairway, never used by any one but the servants. This led to their quarters on the floor above, and into the kitchen, pantries, etc., below.

It was far past one o'clock when Clevering had retired, and upon leaving him Colonel Davidger had switched off all the lights, leaving the entire house in darkness save the night-lamps in the bed-chambers. As there was no moon shining the halls were in total inky darkness. Presumably every one, including the servants, was asleep.

Now, slowly, stealthily, up the back stairs, Clevering perceived a faint, flickering light, such as a candle might throw out. The light was followed by a figure, a woman's figured clothed in white, like a night-gown! Clevering held his breath as she hesitated at the landing and, holding the candle high above her head, motioned as though bidding some one follow her. He perceived as the light illumined her face that the woman was Doris Clay's maid, Louise. Too startled at the girl's strange actions to move or call, he stood watching her. A second figure joined her from below——also a woman's figure, but darkly gowned—and just as she came into sight the maid shifted her position so the watching man did not see her face. Slowly, with stumbling footsteps, the two women climbed the second flight of stairs. The unknown woman appeared to be ill, for Clevering fancied he heard her groan, and the maid Louise assisted her.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he said, as he heard a door above open and close, and the place became utter darkness again.

CHAPTER FIVE

BUT another surprise was in store for the young lawyer that night. Thoroughly aroused, but bewildered by what procedure to follow, he entered the library, stumbling in the darkness against the couch on which lay the recumbent figure of Officer Moran. That worthy merely grumbled, muttered something in his sleep

and rolled over. Clevering fumbled about in the darkness until he struck the library table with his outstretched hand. Feeling around cautiously, he found the chain to an electric lamp resting on the table. This he pulled, and immediately the room was bathed in a soft mellow light which did not disturb the sleeper at all.

In the light Clevering found the brandy and soda, though the guard had helped himself copiously to it. He took a stiff drink and started to return to his room. He was a trifle unsteady from the effect of the liquor taken on an empty stomach under such strained circumstances, and when he saw a second flickering light this time descending the stairs he thought he was "seeing things." The shadow thrown on the wall was that of a woman, but taller and larger than the one made by Louise, and though at first he fancied it was the maid returning for something he changed his mind when the woman herself came into view. She was wrapped in a long, dark shawl, which completely enveloped her figure, and it was not until she was almost directly opposite him that he recognized her as Mrs. Davidger's maid, Rosalie Dalmores.

Clevering, on seeing the light approaching, had quickly switched off the light in the library and put himself in a shadow so that he was in an excellent position to see what was taking place.

Evidently the girl Rosalie had no fears of being spied upon, for she came down the hall with a firm, sure tread, albeit that it was as noiseless and stealthy as a cat's. For a moment Clevering fancied she was going to enter the library, and held his breath lest by hearing it she would discover his presence; but she paused for a second, possibly to assure herself that the young patrolman was asleep and that she would not be disturbed. His lusty snore soon informed her what she desired to know, for to Clevering's intense surprise she crossed over to the room opposite where the body of the dead bridegroom lay. She seemed to hesitate before opening the door, and Clevering fancied he saw her shudder, although the flickering light of the candle she held was so fitful he could not be certain. Then with sudden resolve she flung open the door and entered the room. The door creaked on its hinges as it swung open, and Clevering, using the noise it made to cover any possible sound his footsteps might make, stepped across the threshold of the library door into the hallway, and from a vantage point just outside the other door was a silent witness to the maid's actions.

The room was just as he had seen it earlier in the evening, with the exception of the dead man. He had been placed upon the bed and a sheet thrown over him. Clevering marveled at the cold-blooded, fearless manner in which the maid passed him with only a fleeting glance at her erstwhile lover.

"She was never in love with him," he thought, "or she couldn't be so heartless now, regardless of how he treated her. Death softens all wrongs. But what the devil is she up to?"

As she crossed to a chair and lifted a garment which had been flung carelessly across it, he was minded to stop her as the command had been that nothing should be disturbed, then realizing that the woman had some vital object in being in the room at that hour and so soon after the tragedy, he forbore disturbing her to await developments.

She seemed to be searching for something, for she examined each garment carefully, now and then casting a furtive glance toward the bed as if afraid the silent figure lying there was watching her. Evidently her search was fruitless, for after a little smothered exclamation of impatience she flung the clothing from her and turned her attention to the writing-desk. The key stuck in the lock and she had a difficult time turning it. She broke a fingernail in doing it and swore a pretty oath. Clevering chuckled noiselessly at her impatience.

The desk upon being opened proved to be utterly devoid of papers. It had the appearance of having been thoroughly cleaned out, only a blank check-book and a memorandum pamphlet were left.

The woman stamped her foot viciously on discovering this. But she carefully closed the desk and locked it, taking care to leave no trace of her midnight maraudings.

The candle which she had placed on the bureau sputtered and spit in the draft which came through the open door and cast uncanny, spooky shadows upon the walls, outlining the still white-covered figure upon the bed. The woman paid no heed to the eerieness of the situation, though she hesitated as though undertermined what to do. Clevering expected every minute that she would discover him, for to him his heart-beats sounded painfully audible, and his laborious breathing very like a snore. But after studying a moment, she continued her search, tearing things from the bureau drawers and flinging them right and left.

She was out of the lawyer's line of vision as she knelt before the bureau, and he only heard her exultant intake of breath as she discovered the object of her search. Just as she rose to her feet, clasping a thin packet of letters tied with a white ribbon, he flung discretion to the winds and walked into the doorway. She whirled quickly, facing him, a half sob escaping her. For a moment only she lost her composure, leaning heavily against the bureau behind her, then she smiled saucily and said, showing her white teeth in a pert smile:

"Well, what's the idea?"

"That's what I want to know," said Clevering. He modulated his voice softly, not desiring that the sleeping officer should hear him. He was uncertain just what the girl was doing with the packet of letters and what they were, and he wanted to learn before he went any further. As she did not reply, but continued smiling at him, slyly fumbling at the folds of her gown in an effort to conceal the letters, he used a severer tone in addressing her, and demanded what her presence in the room meant.

"I could ask you the same thing," she said impudently, making a move as if to depart.

"That will do," said Clevering coldly. "I've been watching you since you came in here, and your actions are peculiar, to say the least."

The woman's eyes dilated with something very like fear, but not for an instant did the smile leave her lips.

"Well!" she sneered. "A new indoors sport!"

"And I'll trouble you to hand over that packet of letters you took from Mr. Clay's bureau," he continued, paying no heed to her interruption.

"Oh, say, can the kaiser attitude! You can't tell me what to do!" she said. "I've got as much right in here as you have, if you get down to brass tacks. Anyway, these letters are mine, if you have to know, Mr. Nosey, letters I wrote him when we were sweeties."

"I'll be the judge," said Clevering coldly. He extended his hand for the packet which she managed to keep hidden. "If what you say is true, you wouldn't be here at this hour. Let me see them."

She still stared at him with the exasperating smile on her face. Clevering again felt the desire to shake her that had seized him before, and only for fear of causing an outburst that would arouse Moran did he forbear from wresting the letters from her by force. Evidently she read something of his thoughts, for her expression suddenly changed. Her eyes filled with tears and the smile vanished.

"For Gawd's sake, have a heart!" she whimpered "Can't you see the lay of the land? D'ye think I'd risk coming down here, alone—at night—in this spooky, awful room, with him lying there dead if I hadn't been ordered to do it?"

"Ordered?" said Clevering dully. The fear that he had never been able entirely to banish suddenly gripped his heart again, making him sick and cold.

"Sure." She cast a side glance at him and her black eyes glittered even in the candle light.

"You mean you were ordered to take that packet of letters out of Mr. Clay's bureau before they were found? Do I understand you?" he said in a husky whisper.

"You get me." She made no pretense to hide the letters now, but twisted the white ribbon which bound them about her finger.

It was a very thin packet, with possibly four letters

in it. As she looked at him Clevering fancied he saw a glimmer in her eyes of curiosity as to their contents.

"Who ordered you?"

"Say, you know who I'm working for."

"Mrs. Dav——" he could not bring himself to say the name.

"Yeh," said the maid. "Now, if you'll be so kind as to let me pass I'll be going. This place isn't what I'd call pleasant."

"Just a minute," said Clevering, detaining her. "Just when did Mrs. Davidger ask you to get those letters?"

"Huh?" the woman gasped stupidly, for the instant shaken out of her composure by the suddenness of his question.

"You heard me. When did Mrs. Davidger request you to get those letters?"

"Why, to-night, of course."

Clevering smiled and the smile irritated her.

"For Gawd's sake!" she exclaimed, raising her voice a trifle. "This room gets on my nerves. Come outside and I'll tell you all I know."

"You evidently don't know," he said quietly, "that Mrs. Davidger is very ill and is out of her mind; she could not make such a request."

The woman blinked. "Say, what are you giving me?" she said.

"I'll trouble you to give me those letters."

"I'll see you in——"

Clevering reached out quickly, and a swift twist of his hand pulled the packet from her. "I'll see that Mrs. Davidger gets these," he said. "I'm under the impression they'll be safer with me than with you until she is herself again."

"You can't do that," she cried. "They're mine, and——"

"Your stories don't fit together very well. I'd advise you to go to bed, my lady, and forget all about these or you'll find yourself in serious trouble."

The woman suddenly burst into angry sobs, protesting she was serving her mistress, that he had no right to interfere with her; but upon her discovering her tears had no effect upon the lawyer, she changed her tactics, and flinging discretion to the wind became a veritable fury in her disappointed anger.

"Say! D'ye think you can get away with it? You poor fish! What you don't know would fill a book. It takes a real one with brains to make money on a deal like that——" She abruptly silenced herself, seeing she had gone too far.

"I thought so!" exclaimed Clevering. "So blackmail is the game, is it? You tipped your hand too soon, my lady. Come with me."

"What d'ye mean?" she sneered.

"I think the officer will take care of you."

Before she could protest further Moran, who had been wakened by her outcry, appeared in the hallway. Clevering briefly explained the situation and requested that the officer keep an eye on the maid for the night.

Moran looked a little sheepish when he learned what had taken place and that he had slept through it, so he was a little gruffer with the maid than he would usually have been, just to show his authority, even though he was caught napping.

"Come along, young woman! You stay in the library and we'll see about you in the morning."

With a sullen glowering look at Clevering the maid stepped into the library and the officer turned the key in the lock.

"I'll stay at my post," he said, with an uncertain laugh to Clevering.

"Poor devil!" Clevering muttered as he climbed the stairs to his own room, and looking backward saw the young patrolman seat himself just outside the door of Clay's room and prepare for his night's watch.

Something prompted Clevering to continue climbing after he reached his own floor. At the head of the stairs on the floor above he hesitated, then ever so quietly crept down the hallway to the back stairs. There he paused again. A faint shaft of light came from the keyhole of one of the doors. With ears keenly alert he heard a muffled sob, a low cry, but full of heart-rending pain, as of a soul in mortal agony, then a low mumble of voices.

Baffled, bewildered at what the night had disclosed, he retraced his steps. He was positive the sobs had come from the girl Louise's room, and had a deeper meaning than a possible separation from her lover.

"Egad!" he muttered as he once more crawled in between the sheets. "There won't be any separation after all, now that the wedding tour is off. I give it up! God knows, I hope there's no more sorrow in store for Doris!"

Even as the half-muttered prayer for the woman he loved escaped his lips, he remembered the packet of letters he had taken from Mrs. Davidger's maid, Rosalie. Springing out of bed, he once more switched on the lights, and proceeded to examine them. As he untied the ribbon which fastened them together, he had a guilty feeling as of prying into one's innermost soul, but arguing with himself that by so doing he might save both Doris and her mother untold suffering, he drew the first letter from its envelope. As he hastily perused its pages an exclamation of "Good God!" escaped him. With feverish hands he opened and examined all four letters, his face becoming set and unpleasant to look upon as he read them. When he finally returned them to their envelopes and retied the ribbon, he was gray and haggard and filled with unutterable loathing.

He placed the packet on a chair by his bedside, then lay until morning studying over his discovery.

CHAPTER SIX

MORNING found Clevering tired and infinitely weary, the results of a restless night; but he arose and, after refreshing himself with a cold shower, joined his host in the breakfast room.

He was a little surprised to find Doris there, for he had feared the shock would prove too much for her and possibly bring on a spell of illness, such as had affected her mother; but beyond the circles under her eyes, and a decided pallor, she gave no appearance of having passed a sleepless night or having undergone a severe strain. The soft shimmering morning gown of lavender she wore was very attractive, and Clevering's heart gave an added beat as he took her cool hand in his.

"Good-morning!" she said, with an effort to appear natural, though there was a slight tremble in her voice which she could not disguise and a quiver of the sensitive lips which was infinitely pathetic.

The conversation all during the morning meal was strained with lapses into unnatural silences, and when Clevering suddenly remembered the letters he had taken from the maid Rosalie the night before in John Clay's room, and which he had left on the chair beside his bed, he became speechless with dismay, and no effort on his part could cover his consternation lest some one enter the room and find them. He almost scalded himself in swallowing the hot coffee too quickly, and Colonel Davidger, who had had little to say, made mention of it.

"Beastly stupid of me," Clevering muttered, pressing his serviette to his lips and striving to force a smile. Doris' dark eyes narrowed for a second, and Clevering felt their scrutiny.

"I'm not surprised at anything this morning," Colonel Davidger said bitterly. "It's a wonder you consent to eat food at my table—the horrible affair of last night——"

"Father!" Doris interrupted, then with a little choking cry she sprang to her feet, abruptly pushing back her chair. She attempted to make an exit from the room, which her father intercepted by catching her sleeve as she passed him.

"Honey," he said, all contrition. "Tactless of me! You must try to eat. Come, sit down again."

But the girl pushed him aside, and crossing to the window stood framed in its hangings, her hot face pressed against the cool window pane, her dark, brooding eyes staring into space. Her father hesitated a moment, then

followed her, and stood talking in an earnest undertone to her, utterly oblivious of Clevering's presence.

This was the lawyer's opportunity, and he seized it. Seeing he was unnoticed, he left the breakfast room without an apology and hastened to his own room, there to discover the tell-tale letters just where he had left them. Just what he would do with them he did not know, but of one thing he was certain, they would prove incriminating evidence against the mother of the woman he loved, and as such must be kept from the police. He was most anxious to learn how much knowledge the maid Rosalie possessed, and yet he had a hesitancy in questioning her for fear he would play into her hands and do exactly opposite to what he desired. For the time being he decided to place the letters in a leather wallet he carried, and keep them about his person. After doing this he repaired to the floor below to see the young patrolman before he was relieved by another officer and learn what suggestions he had to offer regarding their prisoner.

Moran was sleepy and sullen, although he had just finished a hearty breakfast and showed no desire to discuss the young woman whom he had locked in the library. Clevering, however, produced a good cigar from an inner pocket and after watching the patrolman take a few puffs on it he seated himself on the lounge beside him and inquired:

"Well, old man?"

"Well, yourself," grinned Moran, considerably more affable from the soothing effects of the weed.

"Are you going to let her go, or hold her as a suspect?" continued Clevering.

"McKay didn't hang anything on her yesterday," said Moran, "and so far as I see she was just nosing around the room out of curiosity. We might complicate matters if we handed her over and not gain a thing. I've an idea it's best to turn her loose, but keep a sharp eye on her to see if she really knows anything."

Clevering drew a sigh of relief. His one object was to keep the letters in his possession and the knowledge that he had them away from the police, and he had been certain that if Rosalie were taken to headquarters she would unquestionably tell all she knew and probably give a very highly colored account of it. Whether or not she knew the contents of the letters, he was uncertain, but she unquestionably had a strong suspicion of their tender. Now, he figured, if she were allowed to leave the library under a command of silence with a threat of arrest if disobeyed, he felt that for the time being Mrs. Danviger's secret was safe.

The maid was pale-faced and red-eyed when they unlocked the library door and requested her to step out, but she had not lost her jaunty manner nor her self-possession. Rather she seemed to have gained in aggressiveness, for she flung back her head with a sniff and smiled sarcastically as Clevering and Moran laid down the rules regarding her silence.

"Now, get me, cuties!" she said, patting her back hair into place in an endeavor to appear tidy and showing her white teeth in an insolent smile. "I've no desire to be a newspaper for the benefit of a lot of old cats dying to read dirt, but—I know a thing or two, and you do me another trick like last night and I'll spill the beans, soup and all."

She swept down the hall with the air of a countess, apparently none the worse for her night in the library. Clevering drew a breath of relief as she turned the bend in the corridor and disappeared from view.

"Some dame!" ejaculated Moran with a hint of admiration in his voice. The girl's brilliant coloring and trim figure had evidently made an impression on the young patrolman. Clevering smiled despite his disturbed mental condition, and again wondered what the girl really knew.

A little later Moran was relieved of duty and Clevering felt compelled to leave the Davidgers to go to his office. As he climbed the stairway to return to his room he came face to face with Doris' maid, Louise. The girl's eyes were very red as though she had been crying, and she barely suppressed a cry of dismay at seeing him. Her usually tidy blonde hair was in disorder and she presented the general appearance of not having slept the night before, for her gown was wrinkled and her cap askew as though it had not been removed.

Clevering blocked the way and stared at her inquiringly.

"Good—good-morning, sir," stammered the girl. "Yes—yes, sir."

Clevering smiled. "What is it, Louise? Your name is Louise, isn't it? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Ghost!" the girl cried out, and she glanced over her shoulder fearfully, then laughed in a pathetic manner. "You scared me, sir, just terribly."

For a moment the lawyer continued staring at the maid through keen, half-closed eyes, then he suddenly snapped his fingers with resolve.

"Louise, come into the library with me."

Her red-rimmed eyes widened. "Why—why, sir—I'm just going to Miss Doris—I——"

"I'll make it all right with your mistress," he said kindly. "I want to talk to you."

"But—but I don't know anything."

She began to wring her hands in a nervous way, and her thin, black-clad shoulders shook perceptibly. Clevering felt very sorry for the girl's discomfort, but her attitude convinced him more than ever she was concealing something.

"Come on, that's a good girl," he said, taking a gentle but firm hold of her arm. "If you don't know anything, why, of course, you can't tell me anything, but maybe you have some knowledge that I should like to know which may seem of very little importance to you, but might mean a great deal to me or—Miss Doris."

"Miss Doris!" almost shrieked the girl. "She—she—mustn't know." Seeing she had said more than she intended, she tried to draw away from Clevering's detaining hand, whimpering: "I—I didn't mean that. I'm all tired out; please let me go; I don't know anything, honest I don't!"

"Come, come," he said a little more firmly. "I don't care to be harsh with you, but I am Colonel Davidger's lawyer, you know, and I think it would be much to your advantage to tell what you know to me in preference to some stranger, some detective, and I'm certain you do know something."

The girl wet her dry lips with her tongue and stared at him with the frightened eyes of a fawn.

"You see," he continued, "I saw you and the other woman last night."

"Oh!" She broke down completely and began sobbing convulsively. The lawyer, still keeping his hand on her arm, led her down the stairs into the library and, after closing the door behind him, seated the weeping girl on the sofa.

"Now, my dear," he said, "who was the woman—and what was she doing here?"

"She is my sister," sobbed the maid.

"Yes, and what was she doing here?"

The girl seemed unable to answer, and the lawyer was forced to repeat the question.

"She—she came to see John Clay," she finally said through tense, white lips, "but she didn't kill him; before God, she didn't kill him! He was dead when she got here! He was! He was! She didn't kill him! Oh, please, mister, believe me. She's suffered enough without accusing her of that. I know." The girl's shrill voice rose to hysteria as she flung herself upon her knees before Clevering, clinging to him frantically as she reiterated her sister's innocence.

"I believe you," he managed to say between her outbursts. "Why should she have tried to see him?"

"Because he was her husband. They were married five years ago, and she was going to prevent his marrying Miss Doris!"

"My God!" muttered the lawyer. Then a heavy weight seemed lifted from his shoulders, and he breathed a prayer

of thankfulness that the woman he loved had been spared the disgrace of becoming a wife in reality to the scoundrel lying dead across the hallway.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EVEN as the prayer was born in Clevering's brain the library door was flung open and Doris entered the room—a white, stricken Doris who flung out her hands imploringly to Clevering as she swayed and then crumpled into the nearest chair. Clevering choked back half a sob as he reached her side, feeling the injustice that the knowledge of her lover's baseness should reach her in this manner, while the maid Louise gave a low cry of "Miss Doris, oh, Miss Doris!" showing genuine contrition that she should have caused her mistress pain.

"My dear, you heard?" said Clevering, drawing the soft, brown head into the hollow of his arm and speaking as one would to a child:

"Don't—don't take it so to heart; he isn't worth your tears, child, you realize that, don't you? Only be grateful that an all-seeing Providence and some one God used as His instrument saved you in time." The tenderness in his voice seemed to quiet her, for she ceased to sob aloud, though convulsive tremors shook her slight body, and she gripped his arm with her two hands.

The maid Louise seemed stunned and continued staring at her mistress with her mouth open, her poor red-rimmed eyes blinking unpleasantly. Finally she burst forth:

"Ain't men the brutes! And him that good-looking, too! I knew no good 'ud ever come of Anna marrying a dancing actor; but I do say it now, wicked or not, I'm glad he's killed, and him a father and the baby dead!"

"Please be still!" admonished Clevering, waving a silencing hand at the girl. But she suddenly seemed to have become loquacious now that the silence was broken and to have a desire to talk.

"You ain't the only one that got stuck on his pretty face, Miss Doris, and there ain't nobody can hold it against you, for many and many's the time Anna, my sister, says to me, 'Lu'—she always called me Lu—'a pretty husband is mighty nice to look at, but they're just like ice-cream in the summertime with windows open. The women are as thick as flies around 'em,' and it was that way with Jack—beg pardon, Miss Doris, Mr. Clay."

"If you knew he was already married to your sister, why didn't you tell me before!" cried Doris, suddenly straightening up and facing the girl with great eyes that flashed fire. Clevering felt the humiliation she suffered, and his heart ached for her. Louise seemed to shrink back into her humble whimpering self.

"I didn't know, Miss Doris, I never did see Anna's husband but once in my life, and that was when they were first married. He was that ashamed of me being a lady's maid and Anna a shop girl before he married her. He said a dancer in a swell cabaret what comes into contact with swell high-class ladies can't have it known that he is married to a woman whose family is in service. Not that I cared much whether he liked it or not, 'cause I didn't cotton to him, jest from what Anna says, though she was clear daffy about him. She was in the silk shirt department at Larkins, and he seen her there when he went to buy. He allus wore silk ones, and that made me suspicious. I guess he was kind of dippy about her, 'cause she was pretty, not like me or Liz—Liz is my other sister. She's married to a drummer that's all O. K., if he ain't so classy, and they ain't no women chasin' him with a fortune to make a swell out of him——"

"Please," interrupted Doris, a heartbreak in her voice; Clevering barely suppressed an oath at the girl's tactless remark, yet he had a desire to let her ramble on, feeling instinctively that if she talked long enough she might say something which would be of value to them, and though he knew every sentence she uttered about the man Doris had married cut like a knife into the girl's sensitive soul, he felt that every stab she received would serve to cut out of the kernel and heal the wound more quickly.

Doris' cry of protestation served to silence her maid, and it was only when Clevering turned to her and bade her explain more fully her sister's marriage that she continued her disjointed narrative.

"They ran off and got married, Anna and the dancer did. I never just figured out why. Of course, he wasn't so swell in them days, you know. I think he'd been a clerk, too, or maybe a piano player in the ten-cent store. But anyway, they didn't know each other two weeks when they got married. She jest sent me a telegram and didn't care whether I liked it or not, her getting married, you know. After us keeping a flat together for over six years, ever since our mother died, and me out maiding, too. It was just about that time I come to work for you, Miss Doris. I just closed up the flat and when Anna come hunting for me to show her new husband she had to come here. But he didn't come along, not him. He wouldn't call at no back door for nobody, a bride or not, so when I did meet him, it was three months after they had been married, in a chop suey joint, after I'd been to the movies with Anna. And if you'll believe me, he acted ashamed to be seen with us. Well, I told him I thought combing a real lady's hair was just as respectable and as genteel as hugging some fat dame out in public for money, even if they did call it dancing. He got sore and so did Anna, and I went home alone. Anna didn't come near me or call me up until after he shook her cold and left her to starve or try to earn a living for herself and the baby. Then she came back to me, and us bein' sisters, and me lovin' her, made me do what I could. It was about six months before Anna was anything like her old self, and I think if it hadn't a-been for me and the baby she'd a-killed herself. In all them six months never once did she hear from that cur. He'd left his job, and though we knew he was still cabareting some place, we knew it was a cinch, if he qu't a job, it was to go to a sweller place, 'cause he had class on the brain. Neither me nor Anna had the money to go 'round to cafés nor hire detectives to hunt him up. Then the baby got sick and died, and it 'most killed Anna. She ain't been nothin' like herself since. But one day she bumped into him on the street, and he actually had the nerve to say he'd been trying to find her, 'cause he had a grand job and wanted to send her money. Well, that poor kid fell for his line of talk, and come home crying for joy 'cause he gave her money. He did send some to her every once in a while, but he always kept begging her to divorce him, promising her everything under heaven if she would. But I guess she still liked him in spite of everything, for she wouldn't do it, and me urging her, too. We never seen him again. I guess that must a-been about the time he started coming to your house, Miss Doris, though Gawd knows I didn't know the man you was in love with was my sister's husband."

Doris sprang to her feet, thrusting Clevering aside as she did so. Her small flower-like face was livid, but the dignity with which she threw back her head seemed to add to her height.

"I never loved him," she said in a strangely calm voice. "Never, never! You know I didn't, Mark. I—I didn't even like or trust him! But—I was angry at you—I wanted to hurt you, and it was too late before I realized what a terrible mistake I had made. Oh, my dear, my dear!"

Clevering put his arms about her, heedless of the maid's presence, and for one blissful moment held her close to him.

"I understand, dear," he whispered, "and thank God it isn't too late! My poor little tired girl. The man seemed to have a strange attraction for women, dear, I understand, and if your mother didn't see under the veneer it isn't to be wondered that you did not with your inexperience and youth."

"Oh, the disgrace of it, the utter commonness of it," she moaned. "We'll be dragged into the courts, the whole sordid story will be made public. I can't endure it, Mark, I can't! The murder was terrible enough, but this is worse! How the newspapers will revel in the scandal—

a society girl married to a cabaret dancer with another wife living! Oh, Mark! What shall I do?"

He did not know how to answer her. Only too well he saw the scareheads in the yellow journals, the story a delight to the insatiable scandal seekers. He could not hope that the story of the other marriage would be suppressed. What he wanted to say to the girl was that he loved her and wanted her to marry him immediately so that by the time the case came to trial she would be his to protect and shield. But a delicacy forbade him uttering the very words which would mean the most to her.

"Anna won't say anything about bein' married to him, Miss Doris," said the maid, her face working convulsively in sympathy for her mistress. "She ain't any prouder now of having him for a husband than you are. She got sick of his doings in the last few months, but she was goin' to make him support her. You see she lost all track of him after he came here to live. I had no idea that the Mr. Clay you spoke of was her Jack. You see, his name wasn't Clay then, but Claiborne, and even when I seen him with you—he was so different from the night I seen him in the chop suey joint, bein' all dressed up and such a gentleman and everything—I naturally didn't think him the same man, and he never noticed me, so how'd I know? If I'd a-known, Miss Doris, I'd a-cut off my right hand before I'd a-let you got married to him, honest I would; you know that, don't you, Miss Doris?"

"I'm not blaming you, Louise," Doris replied wearily. "Of course you didn't know."

"Then him such a friend of your mother's," continued the maid. "They certainly was class to him—I give him credit for that, though Anna did say once that he said to her, dancing with the ladies he danced with was a liberal education to any man, and a mighty profitable living. Well, I've worked all my life, and I'm a servant, but I'd rather be a servant than one of them dames with money and three chins who have to buy men to dance with 'em, 'cause nobody would without pay. My beau may be only a valet, but he loves me, and—'scuse me——" She interrupted herself as she caught Clevering's eyes. "I keep on talkin' like I was a victerolo wound up and playing an Al Jolson record. But I've been so full-up of Anna's sufferings since last night I jest feel as if I don't unbottle 'em, I'll blow up. Anna seen his picture in the paper with yours, Miss Doris, and it set her to thinking, then she come to the house here and waited outside to get a look at your fiancé, to see if it could be her Jack. You see, he allus kept tauntin' her that if he hadn't married her he could a-married a rich woman who would take him up in the world and into society. Well, she saw him walk into this house, and she knew him in a minute, clothes, class and all. She was kind of crazy about it, 'cause she knew he was to marry you right away. She tried to get me, but couldn't, so she telephoned him. She told me this, understand, and told him he just had to see her right away. He just laughed at her over the telephone and told her he didn't even know her, had never heard her name even. With that she comes right up here; she was determined to put a stop to the marriage. She got here just after it was over, and it was me meeting her that kept me from coming right up to your room to help you dress, Miss Doris. She was that white and scary-looking she gimme a turn when I saw her. I just forgot everything, and when she told me who he was I was distracted."

"How did she get in without any one seeing her?" asked Clevering.

"Armonde, my sweetheart, let her in. She come in a side door, and he recognized her. You see, we'd been out together, and he knew something must be wrong for her to come to the house, at this time with a wedding going on, and a bridal tour, and me busy dressing the bride. She asked him to get me quick, and not say a word to any one, and he did."

"Then it was your sister's voice I heard in the library with John," said Doris suddenly.

"Oh, no, ma'am; she didn't get to see him at all—that is, not alive. I come upstairs with her, and she went to his room. Armonde waited in one end of the hall to see if any one was coming and I waited on the stairs. She just went to Mr. Clay's room and opened the door the tiniest bit, when she come rushing back to me, all white, terribly white, and shaking something fierce, and she said to me: 'Lu, he's dead! He's dead! Lying on the floor and blood all around him!'"

"Hem!" said the lawyer. Louise was obviously telling the truth as far as she knew it, but he doubted her sister's statement to her with every reason in the world for revenge.

"Why didn't you tell all this to Inspector McKay when he questioned you last night?"

"I just couldn't," she replied. "Anna made me promise to keep still, 'cause she knew it was murder—just looking at him once she knew it, and we was both too excited and worried to think of anything but her getting away quick. We knew you were saved anyway, Miss Doris, and that was what she'd come for anyway. I sneaked her downstairs into the back pantry until everybody left and no one would see her, then I took her up to my room in the night. She was more dead than alive, poor kid, and had an awful time to climb the stairs. I thought nobody seen us, but he did, and that's all I know. I hope I'm struck dead this minute if it ain't."

"Where is your sister?" asked Clevering.

"You ain't going to do anything to her, are you?" Louise cried frantically. "Please, Mr. Clevering, she's that long suffering she couldn't stand any more trouble, and her with a baby that's only been dead such a little while, and lung trouble, too. You ain't goin' to turn her over to the cops—and her innocent?" Her voice rose to a high-pitched wail, and Doris begged her to be still.

"If she is innocent she has nothing to fear," said the lawyer. "I merely want to talk to her and see if her story corroborates yours. We want Clay's murderer brought to trial as quickly as possible, and with as little publicity as possible. Where is Anna?"

"She's in my room," the maid replied quietly.

"Come, Doris," Clevering said, turning to her. "We'll go upstairs."

"Oh, Mark, must I—I can't bear to see her. You surely understand."

"I know, dear, but however unpleasant the ordeal is, you have to face it sooner or later, and it is best that you see this woman now, and in your own home, than in the courtroom for the first time."

She bowed her head in assent, and he opened the door to allow the maid to precede them, and lead the way up the two flights of stairs to her room.

"Must father and mother know of this?" Doris asked in the hallway. "Mother is very, very ill. I'm afraid this second shock might prove too much for her!"

"I think your father should be told, but for the present your mother should be spared."

At the door of her room Louise hesitated a second, then rapped very lightly three times.

When a very soft voice from within replied "Who is it?" she said: "It's me—Louise. Miss Doris is with me and wants to see you."

"No—no!" came from within. "I can't see any one, Lu, not now; tell her to go away, please."

"I'm afraid you'll have to see her," said Clevering gently. "There is no alternative."

"I wished you didn't have to," said Louise plaintively, but she opened the door and allowed them to step into the room.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE blinds were drawn and the room almost in darkness when they entered the room, so at first the figure lying on the bed was not discernible. But when Louise stepped to the window and raised the shade, Clevering saw plainly the girl huddled up among the pillows and padded coverlets. Despite her pallor and woebegone appearance she was very pretty. Pretty in a fragile, delicate sort of way without any particular per-

sonality other than that of youth, for she was much younger than her sister. Her hair was darker than that of Louise, with a tinge of red in it, and hung in tangled disorder about her shoulders. It gave her a more youthful, childish look. The little wail she gave upon seeing them found a sympathetic echo in the heart of the lawyer, while any suspicions he had as regarded her being her husband's murderer vanished completely as he studied her features. She might be weak (her chin and wide baby eyes proclaimed it), she might be immoral, but she was not of the fiber which makes for revenge, and certainly she could never have fired the shot which took John Clay's life.

Louise crossed to the bed and very tenderly arranged the pillows about her sister, patting the girl's cheek as she did so.

"She's all worn out," she said to the lawyer, "and she ain't never been very strong, her having so much trouble, you know, so I ask you please go kind of easy with her."

"You've no need to worry," Clevering said. "I just want her to tell us all she knows about John Clay."

Anna's chin began to quiver, and her wide, blue eyes filled with tears. "He was a rotten husband, so he was, just a rotten husband!" she sobbed, "but I loved him something fierce, and any woman who loves a man something fierce always gets it in the neck."

Doris never took her eyes off the girl's face. She seemed to have a peculiar fascination for her. Clevering could not but contrast the two women. One so calmly patrician in her dark, vivid beauty, her small, sleek head held regally, her slender figure in its glistening lavender robe, taut and rigid, with the repression which rarely left her. Save for the quivering of her sensitive nostrils and her white teeth pressed deeply into her lower lip, one would never have dreamed she was under any kind of strain. While the other woman, possibly four or five years her elder, looked like a petulant spoiled child, ready to weep at a cross word. Her full-lipped mouth was swollen from crying, her round baby face distorted and discolored. Clevering fancied she was watching the effect of her words upon him, and that she was keenly conscious of Doris' presence, possibly a little proud of having shared her lover with a woman so infinitely above her in station, even though she resented his infidelity to her. There are some women like that who really feel more pride in their husband's possession of another woman superior to themselves than they do jealousy.

At first she seemed to resent Clevering's questioning her, but as in the case of her sister Louise, as soon as her diffidence wore off, her tongue became loosened and she showed a desire to tell everything she knew. Save for a more detailed account of her meeting and subsequent marriage with John Clay—Claiborne as she called him—her story tallied very well with her sister's up to a certain point, wherein she learned of his approaching marriage with Doris, then she became vague and elusive in her statements and finally broke into a tirade of sobs.

"Oh, for Gawd's sake!" cried Louise. "Can't you see the poor kid ain't in no condition for conversation. Just put yourself in her place, Mr. Clevering; suppose you was a deserted wife and your husband was just about to be married to another woman, and wouldn't see you nor nothing, and then when you come to see him he was dead!"

The woman on the bed straightened up quickly, flinging out her arms in a manner which savored of the dramatic. "I'll always see him," she moaned, "a-layin' there, and the pool of blood around him, and——"

"Just how was he lying?" Clevering interrupted quickly.

"Why—why"—Anna hesitated and abruptly ceased—"on his back, and his face looked awful——"

"You say you opened the door just the merest trifle and did not go into the room at all?" Clevering scrutinized her weak, pretty face through half-closed eyes.

"Ain't I said again and again I didn't go in the room? Do I have to keep on sayin' it?" she cried petulantly.

"You will probably be compelled to swear to it in court," the lawyer replied dryly.

"Will—will I be arrested?" she gasped, an ashy pallor creeping over her face.

"You will be subpœnaed as a valuable witness unquestionably, for from what I gather you were the first to see his body instead of Miss Doris. I am wondering how you avoided coming into contact with her."

"She came up the front stairs just as I was helping Anna down the back," said Louise quickly.

"From where did you telephone Mr. Clay, before coming up to the house?" asked Clevering, taking a memorandum pad from his pocket and jotting down a few notes.

Anna hesitated before replying, and the lawyer noticed the look of anxious inquiry in the face of her sister. "I don't know," she finally said.

"You don't know!" he ejaculated in surprise.

"Well, that is, not exactly. It was at a drug-store, but I don't know the name of it."

"How near here?"

Again she hesitated, and Clevering felt the antagonism his persistent questioning aroused in her, although he could not help but smile at her brave attempt to appear at her best before Doris.

"About three blocks, I think," she replied sullenly.

"And did you come over here immediately after the telephone conversation?"

"Yes—er—no! I was that sore at what he said I seen red. The idea of him saying he didn't know me, hadn't ever heard of me! I guess you'd a-been sore, too, after me marryin' him and having a baby and her dyin'. I tried to telephone Louise, but I couldn't get her. Then I thought I'd go to a lawyer, and then all of a sudden I remembered something about the preacher asking if any one objects to the wedding, so I decided to come over and say I objected, and I knew he couldn't face that, so I come over. When I got here, though I didn't have the nerve to burst into the crowd, and go through with it, so I told Armonde, Lu's beau—you see, he let me in—to tell Lu I had to see her right away, on a matter of life and death, and by the time she come they'd already got married. So I made up my mind he'd see me if I had to——" she interrupted herself, and Clevering, turning about abruptly, caught an expression on the face of the older sister which puzzled him. She was leaning forward, her red-rimmed china blue eyes fastened with an almost hypnotic stare on Anna's face. When she noticed Clevering's glance she smiled pathetically as much as to say, "There, didn't I tell you?" and the lawyer nodded assent.

"I guess that is all," he said quietly. "I'm sorry to have annoyed you, but you must realize how very essential your story will be to the police. However, for the present I advise you to say nothing to any one, and until it becomes necessary to do so, I shall be silent concerning your marriage and visit here. Are you going to remain with your sister?"

"Oh, can she, Miss Doris?" exclaimed Louise eagerly. "She ain't in any condition to be left alone!"

"Of course she may stay with you," Doris replied. She moved toward the door, evidently desirous to leave the woman's presence as quickly as possible. Clevering stepped before her, and, opening the door, allowed her to pass into the hallway. As a parting admonition to Anna, he said: "Don't go away without consulting me, Mrs.——"

"Claiborne," Anna said, a strange little smile playing about her lips.

Doris swayed the merest trifle as she moved down the hallway with Clevering. He started to place his arms about her, but she drew back. "Don't!" she whispered. "Oh, Mark, I guess I'm being punished for what I did to you. It was wicked of me to marry another man loving you—but it doesn't seem fair that I should be hurt so much." As they came to a bend in the corridor of the floor below, she hesitated before a door which Clevering knew led into her mother's apartments.

"I must go to mother," she said softly. "I've not seen her this morning, and I've been so selfish in my own trouble I've neglected her."

Clevering caught a fleeting glimpse of the white, rigid figure lying on the bed near the window as she opened

the door. He could see Mrs. Davidger's blue-black hair in careless disorder upon the pillows, her pallid face with purple shadows under her eyes and the nurse seated beside the bed. A momentary flash of pity passed over him for the intense suffering that the woman had undergone to reduce her to such a condition, but instantly he was reminded of the contents of the letters he possessed, and he thrust sympathy aside.

"I wonder," he muttered as the door closed after Doris, and he turned to go down the stairs to make his delayed departure—"I wonder if she did kill him? Good God! It doesn't seem possible that a woman of her refinement and breeding could commit a murder, and yet it doesn't seem possible that—but she unquestionably was with him in the library. Doris heard them, and I have her hair-pin to prove it. If she could have managed to be with him in the library after the wedding she could have been with him in his own rooms. And yet, with everything pointing to her as the guilty one, I can't believe she did it. It points too obviously to her to be true!"

A prey to his conflicting emotions, he did not see the maid Rosalie until she collided with him coming up the stairs, and losing her balance would have fallen had he not caught her.

"Well, look who's here!" she ejaculated as she adjusted her cap, which had twisted awry when she stumbled. "I didn't expect to see you so soon!"

Clevering smiled grimly. He resented the girl's flippant impertinent manner and her knowing air of sharing a secret with him. When she leaned against him in a decidedly coquettish manner as though loathe to carry on further conversation with him and began toying with his coat lapels, he moved impatiently away.

"Colonel Davidger sent me up to you," she continued, giving him a sidelong glance out of her sloe-black eyes. "Some cops or detectives have come, and they're in John Clay's room. The fellow that did all the questioning is with them. He wanted to see you."

"Inspector McKay," said Clevering quickly, a premonition that all was not well flashing over him.

"Yeh, if that's his name. I wonder what I am in this house anyway? It's a cinch I'm not a lady's maid any longer, for they have had me answering doorbells and running errands all morning. I guess it's back to the cabaret for mine!"

Clevering did not wait to hear her remarks, but descended the stairs with the intention of doing as McKay requested. Just out of John Clay's room, he remembered the tell-tale letters he had in the leather wallet in his coat pocket.

"Mustn't have them on me when I talk to McKay," he thought, and wheeled abruptly to go to his room, thinking to find some hiding-place there for the time being. As he did so he reached in his pocket for the wallet, then pulled his hand away with a smothered exclamation of dismay for the wallet was gone—letters and all.

"Damn that girl Rosalie! She has taken them. That's why she stumbled against me. I take my hat off to her. She's clever!"

Before he could go after her to demand that she return his property, Inspector McKay opened the door opposite him and, on seeing him, exclaimed:

"Ah, here we are. Come in, Mr. Clevering, we are waiting for you!"

CHAPTER NINE

DURING the time Clevering was interviewing Anna in her sister Louise's room, Inspector McKay and his valuable assistant, Rogers, had been on their way to the Davidger home. McKay was silent during most of the ride, though Rogers ventured an opinion now and then and was evidently trying to learn if his chief has any clues upon which to base a deduction.

It was a clear, crisp morning, very pleasant, though the air was "bitey" and the long, low racer McKay drove spun through the park, leaving a trail in the newly fallen snow. The trees were stark and naked save for patches here and there of snow, which glistened with a myriad of sparkling crystals in the morning sunlight.

After grunting non-committally at several of Rogers' questions, McKay flung aside the Havana upon which he had been chewing, and turning to his assistant, said, smiling:

"Well, what's the dope, Rogers, what are you driving at? Out with it and stop beating around the bush."

Rogers' florid face became a trifle redder and his fat, pudgy body, which reminded one of a pouter pigeon, seemed to swell and be about to burst the seam of his hard working serge suit which had evidently "worked overtime."

"Well, since you put it that way," she said confidentially, "I've got an idea, and I don't think I'm far off either, that the colonel's wife knows more about this affair than anybody gives her credit for."

McKay squinted one eye as though he were measuring the distance from the wheel he was steering to the ground.

"Marvelous!" he satirically exclaimed. "Upon what do you base your theory?"

"Oh, rats!" exploded his friend good-naturedly, shaking his mop of curly hair. "You take the pep out of a fellow. Didn't you notice that the older woman took the death more to heart than the bride, and they said she was too sick to be bothered. Something back of it, believe me."

"Yes?" There was just the hint of a question in the monosyllable.

Rogers wiped his face on the back of his glove. He looked as if he had just been briskly scrubbed with very strong soap and hot water, for his round moon face shone.

"You know there was a bit of unsavory gossip about the dead man and the colonel's wife?" he continued. "I heard some of the guests mention it. Nothing very much, you know, only there were some people who were onto the fact that he wasn't as much a gentleman as he seemed, and they thought Mrs. Davidger knew it, too, for she'd known him a long time and had been seen dancing with him no end of times."

"I'd advise you to keep that under your hat," said McKay coldly. The racer drew up to the brownstone house which sheltered the colonel's family and, springing out, McKay sprinted up the stairs to ring the bell.

They were admitted by the maid Rosalie, who eyed them inquiringly as though undecided at their presence there so early in the morning. She ushered them into the reception-room, and after giving them a look of scrutiny as though to photograph their faces for future reference, she went to announce their presence to Colonel Davidger.

The colonel was obviously annoyed at their early morning visit and took no pains to conceal his displeasure.

"I thought you examined everything last night?" he said.

"We did to a certain extent," replied McKay, "but before I give permission to have the body removed I should like to go over the ground again. The morning light may serve to reveal something the lamp-light didn't."

Without replying Colonel Davidger led them to the room where the tragedy occurred. It was still shrouded in night-like gloom, the heavy draperies keeping out the sunshine. There was nothing to indicate that Rosalie or Clevering had been there the night before. McKay drew aside the hangings and the morning sun poured in to proclaim its late occupant's taste.

The color scheme was deep brown. The rug which covered the entire floor was a three-toned brown, and in the center of it was a deeper spot, gruesome in its meaning, for it marked where the sheet-covered figure now lying on the bed had been found. The walls were hung with very good tapestries covering all but small spaces through which a russet brown paper could be seen. The slight disorder of the preliminary dressing and packing had not been cleared away, so the detectives had ample scope for their work of getting further evidence.

McKay, standing in the center of the room, with squinted

eyes scrutinized every inch of the floor, walls and furniture, while his assistant Rogers with powder and powerful glass went over the smooth surfaces of the mahogany furniture, paying special attention to the large library table at the foot of the bed. He had only studied this for a moment when he gave a low exclamation.

"Here, chief, see here. There's two sets of hand prints, both women's. No, by Jove, there are three; one must have stood facing that window while the others faced the door."

"Which door?" asked McKay, wheeling about quickly and stepping to Rogers' side.

"Why, the door leading into the hall," Rogers replied, looking at one door which opened into the bathroom and to the one at his right which evidently opened into a closet. Facing him were three windows opening on to the street.

As he stood, the table was directly between the door which led into the hall and the middle window. Two large wing chairs rested in the spaces between the three windows, while window seats, tapestry covered, cut the windows off at about two feet from the floor.

A small Windsor chair stood in front of the closed desk, and in the corner was a closely packed wardrobe trunk ready to be moved. Except for the Colonial bed which jutted at right angles from the left corner of the room in the center the remainder of the space was open.

"One of these hands was clenched and pounded on this table here, chief," continued Rogers, while McKay leaned forward to examine his discovery.

"Hém!" said McKay, scratching his head thoughtfully. "Don't remember seeing anything like this last night. Who has been in this room since we left?" he asked, turning to Colonel Davidger, who still stood in the doorway watching them.

"No one, to my knowledge," he replied, "the young man you left in charge was here all night."

"No one would get past Moran," said Rogers quickly. "Has he gone yet?"

"Send for him," said McKay, but before Colonel Davidger had rung the bell to summon a servant the young patrolman himself stepped into the room, as he was about to leave, having learned that his superior was in the house. He looked a little embarrassed as he mumbled, "Good-morning, chief." No doubt he was wondering if McKay could by any chance have known of his infraction of orders last night. "The sharp lookout" he didn't keep rankled in his mind. McKay greeted him as affably as he ever did any one, and said:

"Moran, you may go now and report to me here tonight, or if I'm not here, relieve Kelley, and stay here again during the night."

"Right, sir," said Moran, saluting. With evident relief he left the room and nearly collided with Rosalie, who was directly in front of the door outside. She was not at all embarrassed at having been caught eavesdropping. She curtesied in mock seriousness, and chirruped sweetly:

"Morning, brave ossifer; whither away? And have you solved the riddle yet?"

"No, I haven't, and I'm going home—to take the sleep you kept me from, and it's a lucky thing for you I didn't tell about your visit of last night."

Moran was young and impressionable, and while only on the force a short time, his dealings with crooks had not had time to harden him. He was not to be greatly blamed that Rosalie's wild beauty and flip careless manner attracted him even though he knew the girl was acting a part to hide something.

"And is me brave cop going to sleep all day?" she asked, with a winning smile and an invitation to him to walk down the stairs with her.

Moran rose to the occasion, determined to know more of her and what was hidden back of her evident attempt to hold him in conversation.

"No, I'm thinking of takin' in a show this afternoon; can you come?"

"Yes," she readily agreed. "It's my afternoon off, besides I'd be in the way around here now."

"Good. Suppose you meet me at the Palace about two o'clock."

"Righto, dearie." She blew him a kiss and tripped off down the hall until he was well out of the house when she darted back intent on learning what was taking place in John Clay's room.

After McKay sent the young patrolman home he turned to Colonel Davidger and inquired if the lawyer he had met the night before could be questioned.

"Yes, indeed," the colonel replied almost eagerly, "he is still in the house. At my request he remained all night with us. He is my personal attorney, you know."

"Suppose you get him, then?" said McKay. "I've a few things I'd like to ask."

"Now," said the inspector to Rogers as the door closed after the colonel. "Go to it." His attitude showed that his desire to see Clevering was more of a ruse to be left alone in the room than from any wish for information the lawyer might furnish him.

Rogers looked at him in surprise. "I don't see anything different from what we found last night," he said.

"No? Well, cast your optics on the bathroom floor."

Rogers, who had thoroughly gone over the entire bedroom with no results different from what he had learned the night before, looked up a bit surprised at McKay's remark.

"I don't get you." he said.

McKay pointed to a spot in the tiled floor and Rogers whistled, then leaning forward, touched the tiling.

"Grit!" he muttered. "Some one has come in here and carried this on his shoe."

McKay nodded, and crossing to a clothes hamper which stood behind the door, and which was evidently used for soiled linen, he made note of the fact that the lid was up.

"Some one wanted the blood-stained towel we discovered last night and took a long chance to get it," he said. "But he forgot to cover his tracks."

"He?" queried Rogers.

His chief's reasoning appeared to be over his head.

"Take a look at the fire-escape. There's a set of footprints on it."

"But a woman handled the revolver," said his assistant, puzzled.

"I warrant you that. So did a man, and so did Mrs. Clay herself."

"I give it up," muttered Rogers. "It's a cinch a man was in this bathroom, but the more I find out the less I know."

"Will you examine the fire-escape?" McKay said briskly.

"You think the murderer——"

"I think nothing," McKay interrupted.

"You're right!" muttered Rogers after flinging open the window and making a rapid survey of the snow-covered grating. There were footprints on the icy crust, but had almost been obliterated by the new fallen snow.

"Unquestionably made by a man's dress shoe," McKay remarked to Rogers in reply to the latter's exclamation of "Come here." "But it's hard to determine the size; they're half lost in those slatted openings."

Apparently satisfied with what he had seen, he asked Rogers to call Colonel Davidger into the room, and upon greeting him he struck immediately at the heart of what was in his mind. He produced the pistol, which he had taken possession of the night before, and quickly unwrapping it held it suspended by the string passed through the trigger guard:

"I have found three sets of finger prints on this handle."

The colonel's calm, cold exterior underwent a change so slight as to almost be unnoticeable, but the note of surprise in his voice was genuine as he echoed McKay's words. "Three sets of finger prints! Why—are you sure? What are they, men's or women's?"

McKay's tone was a trifle harder as he replied: "Two women's and a man's."

"Mine," said the colonel quickly. "If you will remember I examined the revolver upon entering the room. Stupid of me, and I regret it very much."

McKay squinted his keen gray eyes as he puzzled over

the colonel's remark. "That's another phase on the matter. No, I didn't know you touched the gun. Perhaps you can explain the footsteps on the fire-escape also, and the spot in the carpet below the window where the snow on his shoe evidently melted?"

"Footsteps on the fire-escape?" said the colonel, evidently puzzled. "No, I know nothing of them."

McKay's face showed his disappointment at this, but changed expression at the colonel's question.

"By the way, what arrangements can be made about his burial?" He nodded toward the white mound on the bed.

"I guess you can go ahead on that. I'll give the necessary orders. I've everything I need now. Oh, by the way, colonel, do you mind handing me that book beside you there on the table?"

The colonel looked a little surprised at the request, for it was a small red leather-covered volume of poems.

"Thanks. I thought—no, I guess not—but I thought it was on the floor last night. My mistake." McKay laughed, evidently enjoying Davidger's bewilderment.

"If you've no further need of me now, will you excuse me?" the colonel said. "My wife is ill and I want to go to her."

"We will have to question her again," said McKay, "when she is able to give us a connected story. But we are through with you for the present."

The colonel favored him with a short, strained smile and left the room. No sooner had he done so than McKay snapped at Rogers:

"See what you can find on that book the colonel just handled, Rogers."

Rogers quickly examined it and put it down with a shrug expressive of dissent.

"Let me see," said McKay—he examined it for a moment, pursed his lips, exaled a deep breath as though he felt displeasure at his waste of time, then snapping his fingers impatiently he paced up and down the room a couple of times, finally flung open the door just as Clevering was starting up the stairs after Rosalie. The lawyer entered the room at his greeting, but showed quite plainly the result of the double strain he had undergone. His vigorous health and legal training stood him in good stead, for he was quite as collected and cool as though it were an everyday occurrence for him to be matching his wits with one of the keenest detective minds in the country.

"Good-morning, inspector," he said. "You wanted to see me? What can I do for you?"

"Will you kindly be seated, Mr. Clevering?" said the inspector. "I should like to ask you a few questions if it isn't intruding too much on your time."

"Delighted to be of any assistance," Clevering said, sitting beside the table. McKay, after a few preliminary and circumlocutive remarks, suddenly inquired:

"Are you in love with Mrs. Clay?"

Clevering was nonplussed for a moment; after swallowing, he replied coolly:

"Yes, I am."

The lawyer's frankness momentarily took the officer off his feet and brought a grin of appreciation to Rogers' pudgy red face. Evidently that worthy knew something of love himself.

"Is Mrs. Clay aware of this?" asked McKay.

Clevering moved uneasily; he resented McKay's questioning, though he answered readily enough:

"She should be. We were engaged to be married before John Clay came upon the scene."

The detective suddenly wheeled a chair about, and sitting astride it faced the lawyer.

"Come on, Clevering," he said good-naturedly. "Come across with what you know."

Clevering coolly lighted a cigar before replying. "My dear fellow, if I knew anything I would be only too glad to offer it to you. I am quite as anxious as you are to have this cleared up.

"Do you really mean that, Clevering?" The inspector leaned forward, fastening Clevering's eyes with his own as though striving to pierce the veil and read the lawyer's innermost thoughts. The other withstood the gaze for a few seconds, then sprang to his feet.

"Of course I mean it," he snapped back, made irritable by the detective's manner. "What are you driving at? I'm not used to having my word questioned and see no reason why I should take it from you, inspector."

"Easy now, my dear fellow, we're not getting anywhere, you know, if you take that attitude." McKay's velvet tones served to make Clevering ashamed of his sudden outburst.

"Sorry, McKay, a bit off this morning, you know, and I do want to help." He dropped back into his chair, indicating with a gesture his readiness to continue the interview.

He was little prepared for McKay's next thunderbolt, however, for with a significant smile the inspector inquired: "Then why don't you give me the jeweled ornament you picked up in the library last night?" His tones were steely velvet. Clevering blinked, then silently reached in his pocket and produced the pin which he had secured the night before, and handed it to the inspector.

It was an amber pin with the general outlines of an Arabian dagger; the curved and jeweled hilt was set with sapphires, the curved handle a solid mass of chip diamonds, the blade, however, was curved and a two-pronged tortoise, like an ordinary hair-pin. McKay turned it over in his hands a few times, held it up to the light and extracted a short length of black hair.

Just at that moment Colonel Davidger entered the room; his eyes immediately sought the object McKay still held in his hand.

"Why, where did you get Mrs. Davidger's pin?" he asked.

CHAPTER TEN

ABOUT five minutes before two o'clock Rosalie entered the long lobby of the Palace and took a place midway in the lines of anxious-faced persons who were scanning closely every new incoming face. It was always that way at the Palace, especially in the winter, when the theater offered a refuge for the coalless. The lobby was crowded with theater-goers, hangers-on, and with a few who waited inside to get warm.

Greetings could be heard on all sides, comparisons of seats, scoldings for being late, explanations and excuses and a good deal of comment on the traffic, which seemed to bear quite a burden of the excusations of wives, husbands, children and friends and chronic kickers.

The long line at the ticket window showed the effects of the storm; traffic and the usual clashes of humans meeting humans when short on temper. The near wits were also there with eyes glued to the wet spot on the tiled floor where most of the snow-caked heels of the newcomers jeopardized not a few necks.

Rosalie was one of these. Dressed in a jaunty, tailored suit and white fox furs, she was prettier than ever. She was laughing merrily at the contortions of a stout woman trying to save herself from falling when Moran came into view. He had evidently been there before, for as soon as his eyes lighted on her he smilingly raised his hat and came over to her side.

"I've got pretty good seats," he said, showing her the green tickets. "Come on in and we can talk better out of the drafts." A sidelong glance took in all the girl's costume, and he smiled appreciatively. The overture was being played when a neatly uniformed girl ushered them into their seats, and under cover of this, Moran whispered:

"Well, pretty, tell me why so quiet, now we're here?"

Just as she was about to reply they were obliged to stand to allow another couple to pass in and occupy the seats behind them.

Moran felt something strike his boot as it fell when they arose, and for some reason, probably a second sense, he did not immediately pick up the object.

He did, however, kick it between his feet and hold it until an opportunity presented itself for him to stoop and get it. Moran was no fool, and although he had felt flattered at the maid's evident admiration for him he was a bit puzzled and wanted to "get" the idea that had made her practically ask him to meet her. They watched the performance going on upon the stage with varying interest until nearly intermission, when Moran remembered the object between his feet. Surreptitiously he allowed his hat to become dislodged from underneath his seat. He stooped and recovered it, and at the same time the object which disclosed itself to him was a thin packet of letters tied with a ribbon. Under cover of replacing his hat he glanced hastily at them and received one of the shocks that the day held for him. The clearly written name Mr. John Clay leaped at him from the first envelope in the packet, but there was no address or post-mark. Hastily flipping back the envelope, he realized the fact that he held in his hands four letters that had been written to the murdered man, evidently by a feminine hand, and that within his grasp was valuable information. Business dominated any personal feeling, and he took possession of them.

His lack of attention to the stage and herself caused Rosalie to turn in time to see him just as he slipped the packet into his pocket; instantly she felt in her muff and discovered her loss. Her composure dropped from her like a glove, and heedless of the persons about her, she muttered, "Damn you!" and reached across to recover them. But Moran was too quick for her; gently but firmly he grasped her arm, whispering as he did so:

"No scene, if you please. Let's go out where we can have a nice little heart-to-heart talk."

"To he—— with your talk; I want those letters!" she snapped back, struggling to keep her voice quiet, but her black eyes flashed fire and she did not hesitate to show her claws. Moran was firm, however, and they left the theater, greatly to the relief of their neighbors, who showed their annoyance at being disturbed. Moran was as smiling and eager as though he were dining with his sweetheart, but beneath his suave exterior he was seething with excitement.

"After the theater the usual thing being done this year is to take your lady friend to a food foundry," he said, grinning at the discomfited Rosalie, whose arm he held as fondly as though he were a loving swain. She tried to pull away, but he paid no heed to her struggles, saying blandly:

"Come on, we'll go right across the street here to Burchill's, and oh, I'm gonna tell you a lot o' things, and you're gonna tell me a lot o' things."

"Yes, I am," and the afterthought "Not" was jerked from her as she stepped into a small hole and was saved from a fall only by Moran's firm grasp.

"Oh, yes, you are," he was fairly purring now. "And they're not going to be lies either, because I'm going to follow you pretty closely, Miss Flip, and you're going to be checked up on all your statements from now on. I was kind of an easy mark last night letting you off as I did, but I don't fall for everything. Do you get me?"

"Ain't you the wise guy?" she snickered as he pushed the revolving door and, giving her a little thrust, followed her into the lobby of Burchill's. "I'd like to know just what you think you are going to get out of me anyway."

Moran followed the ceremonious head waiter in silence, and after allowing them to seat them handed her the menu card with the air of serving a queen.

His silence irritated her, and evidently with a desire to get even she ordered a quart of vintage wine and a lobster. Moran never blinked, though secretly he determined to charge the expense of the repast to headquarters.

"You know you're a cute little trick," he said, leaning on his elbows, his face almost in hers. She made a little grimace at him, and drawing a cigarette from a package he extended, she lighted it and blew a puff of smoke in his face.

"Glad you think so," she said pertly.

"I might be strong for you, if you weren't so damn clever. I don't quite get you," he continued, evidently feeling his way with her.

"Oh, can that," she snapped. "I see your drift, and the hot air don't go. I thought you were the real thing, but I got left. Gimme back my property, and let's beat it."

"Without the champagne and the lobster! Oh, lady, have a heart!"

"Not on your life! It ain't every day an honest-to-God policeman wines a girl at Burchill's."

"Come on, be a good scout," he said suddenly, dropping his bantering tone. "I don't know what your dope is, but you know you can't get away with anything crooked."

"Crooked," she snapped. "Who said I was doing anything crooked?"

"I do."

"Well, I like your nerve."

"Thanks. It's a cinch these letters don't belong to you, and that they're the reason you were in the dead man's room last night. It don't take a Sherlock Holmes to see they were written by a woman, not a very young woman, either, and also that they were never mailed, but were delivered personally."

Rosalie eyed him impertinently through half-closed eyelids as she took a sip of the wine the waiter had served. "Go on," she said.

"Now, you never wrote these letters," continued Moran. He moved his chair away from hers so that in untying the ribbon which bound the packet he was out of arm's reach so she could not snatch them from him.

"You betcher life I didn't write them," said Rosalie, evidently with more of a desire to save incriminating herself than to furnish Moran with any information. "You read what's in 'em and you'll see I didn't."

"Then why did you steal them?" said the officer. "Come on, lay down your hand to me and I'll swear you won't get into trouble."

"Honest?"

"Yes."

The girl hesitated a moment, staring off into space as though seriously considering just how much to tell.

"Well," she said at last, with sudden resolve and evident sincerity. "The colonel's wife, Mrs. Davidger, wrote those letters."

"So I thought."

"Oh, you did, eh? Bright child; and I wanted 'em back to serve her and to do myself a good turn."

"Serve her?" queried Moran.

"Yeh, I knew that if you cops got your hands on 'em that she wouldn't stand any more chance of not being arrested than the kaiser has of going to heaven."

"You know the contents, then?"

She had the grace to blush, although she replied readily enough:

"Of course I do; didn't I deliver every one of them to John Clay myself? And you can bet your life I knew there must be something interesting in them. For when a middle-aged dame with a rich husband is so plumb crazy about a young chap that she sends notes to him by her maid there must be the Old Nick to pay. And believe me, I wasn't far off, either." She paused to watch the effect of her words.

"Go on," said Moran quietly.

"Well, I figured that on getting the letters I'd be saving her from a dirty scandal and arrest for murder, though I knew they couldn't do anything to her after a trial, because she didn't kill him——"

"How do you know that?" Moran asked abruptly.

"Say, do you want to hear my story or not?" she replied.

He nodded in the affirmative, smiling at her impudence, and she continued.

"I also figured that she'd be mighty grateful to me if I could return her property to her."

"Blackmail," the young patrolman whistled.

"Oh, well, any name you like." She did not seem at all discomfited, but drank the remainder of her glass of wine and attacked her lobster with the keen relish of one to whom such delicacies are not any everyday occurrence.

"You've spoiled my game, and maybe lost me a bungalow on Long Island by your nosiness. Ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

"There are other ways of getting bungalows," he said insinuatingly, and the girl actually flushed as she tried to meet his eyes.

"Say, listen," she said after a moment's silence, during which Moran scanned the letters with furrowed brows, "on the level, I'm dead sorry to have you get those things. Aside from any profit I might have had from them, I'm pretty keen for Mrs. Davidger, honest I am, and she's more of a fool than anything else, not bad at all, and she's been darn nice to me ever since I've come to work for her. I did take them to save her, honest I did, even if I did expect her to pay me for it. Ain't there some way you can keep them back so that old lynx eyes inspector of yours don't see 'em? It'll kill her, before God, it'll kill her!"

There was a note of sincerity in the girl's voice which somehow made the young officer trust her.

"I'll do my best," he said. "They sure do sound bad, though."

The letter spread on the table before him was the outpourings of a broken heart. It read like a soul in torture, and while short the space between the lines told more than the written words themselves. It began without preamble and finished without signature.

"Don't you realize the monstrous thing you are about to do? Have you lost all sense of decency and manhood? Or did you never possess them? Was I so blinded in my weak infatuation that I set up a cloven image on a marble pedestal and worshiped it, seeing a god through my deluded eyes? My God! John, can't you understand I am not pleading for myself, but for my child, my innocent daughter who must be spared this sacrilege? Even though you pass out of my life forever, and I pray God you will, you must not, dare not marry her.

"Can't you conceive the horror of my facing you as her husband, the torture of knowing that through me, her own mother, my child has given herself to a man not only unworthy, beneath her in family and station, but an unmitigated scoundrel as well. For if you do this thing, Satan himself is not blacker than you! If it is money you want I'll give you everything in the world I possess. I have given you position already, so you do not gain it through her. When I think of where I found you, believing you misunderstood and unfortunate, when I remember all I have done for you, I wonder God does not strike me dead for nursing such a viper in my family! You cannot do this! Sooner than allow you to so wrong my child, I would kill you with my own hands, and think I was committing no sin!"

"Pretty strong!" Moran said, looking up at the maid who had been eyeing him as he read the pages.

"Don't read any more," she said huskily. "They're all alike, only stronger. I've read 'em, and they all threaten to kill him if he marries her daughter."

"He did marry her, and some one did kill him," said Moran, replacing the letter in the envelope and tying it up with the others.

"But she didn't do it! I know that, for I was with her when the murder occurred."

Moran put the packet of incriminating evidence in his inner pocket, and paying the check, left the restaurant with the now demure and docile lady's maid.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CLEVERING, sitting at his rolled-top desk, apparently in the act of reading his morning mail, was rudely awakened from a day-dream, in which Doris was the central figure, by some one pounding vigorously on the office door.

"Come in!" he said somewhat gruffly, swinging about in his swivel chair. But when Colonel Davidger entered the room, slamming the door shut behind him, Clevering sprang to his feet, apologizing for his surly manner.

The colonel slumped immediately into the nearest chair and stared at his lawyer with bloodshot eyes. While his heavy breathing and nervously clenched hands bespoke a severe shock or mental strain.

"My dear colonel, what is it?" Clevering exclaimed, as the older man endeavored to speak, but could not. He produced a bottle of brandy from a drawer in the desk and succeeded in inducing Davidger to drink some of it, after which the stricken man blurted forth:

"Clevering, they've arrested my wife for the murder of John Clay!"

"Good God, no!" exclaimed the lawyer, horrified. "It can't be!"

"Yes," continued the colonel. "She is too ill to be removed, but they have stationed two officers with her to see that we do not help her to escape."

"It's incredible," muttered Clevering, though in his soul he had been expecting it, especially since his interview with McKay the day before, when the jeweled dagger hair ornament had been identified as Mrs. Davidger's, and the maid Rosalie had purloined the letters.

"It's damnable," groaned the colonel. "She is innocent, absolutely innocent. I know, because I—I'm reasonably certain I killed John Clay!"

Clevering's face became livid with amazement.

"Good heavens, man! Do you know what you are saying?" he exclaimed, catching the ashen-faced man by the shoulders. "Are you saying this to protect your wife! If so, you are a fool, for an arrest does not mean a conviction!"

"I'm telling the truth," Davidger said. "If I didn't kill him, at least I had every intention of doing so."

"Have you said this to any one else?" asked Clevering.

"No. No. I came to you right away. I'm almost insane as it is! If I were sure, absolutely sure, I killed him, I'd go and give myself up, for there's no jury in the country would convict me on such grounds; but I don't know—I don't know if I did it."

The tortured man sprang to his feet and paced the office floor like a caged animal, his face working convulsively. Clevering momentarily doubted his sanity for his reiteration that he had killed Clay, and then his uncertainty of it, savored of mental derangement.

"Come, come, colonel," he said gently. "Get a grip on yourself and tell me everything." He pressed the older man into a chair, and drawing another opposite to him seated himself so that in facing him he could watch every expression on his client's face.

"It's so damned dirty!" groaned the colonel. "I can't somehow bring myself to face it."

"Perhaps I understand more about it, know more than you imagine," Clevering said softly.

Davidger looked up quickly.

"About my wife and that rat?" he gasped.

Clevering nodded. "You mustn't blame her too much, old man. She was a great deal alone, and idle, then she had reached the dangerous age, and——"

"Don't——" exclaimed the colonel, a shudder shaking him from head to foot. "You are like the rest—like I was—you believe the worst—the blackest of her."

"But——" remonstrated Clevering.

"She was a fool—a silly, simple fool, all the more so because of her years and sheltered, protected existence," said the colonel. "It was because she had too much time and money, and I neglected her, that she took up with this young cub. Only as a pastime at first, and he deluded her into believing him a genius, and used her influence and affluence to further his own ends. Other women her age were tangoing and cabareting, so she did likewise, with no wrong intentions. Doris was away at school, you know, and she was always alone."

"How did you learn this?" the lawyer asked, feeling a great wave of admiration for the white-haired old man whose loyalty and sense of protection for his wife never left him, even at such a crisis, when he might well have doubted her.

"The night that Clay was—died! But in a different manner, I can assure you. I never cared for the young puppy, but if he amused her I didn't object. It never entered my mind that he would make love to her—damn him—and I was surprised that she objected so strongly at his marrying Doris, when she had vouched for him, and had made him her special protégé. Poor blithering idiot that I was, the last to see what all the world knew, and probably put the worst construction upon!"

"No, you're wrong, there, colonel, no one questioned your wife's friendship with Clay."

"They will now," he groaned. "The police have those damning letters she wrote him."

"Good God!" muttered Clevering.

"If giving myself up and swearing I killed him would save her I'd do it in a minute," continued the other. "But it won't. The whole dirty scandal must come to light—and yet, Clevering, as God's my judge, she was innocent of anything criminal. I swear it! I know it, now that it is too late. She had a mad infatuation for the cur which he pretended to return, and which he encouraged with his flattering attentions, and there were some kisses exchanged which made her, always a pure, virtuous woman, feel herself a fallen Magdalen. But she never forgot her marriage vows. Never!"

"I believe you, colonel." Clevering patted the old man's shoulder reassuringly. "But tell me how you came to desire his life if you knew your wife was innocent?"

The colonel mopped his damp brow with a shaking hand.

"Just after the wedding, when Clay went upstairs to dress for the journey, I decided to make him a present of some mining stocks, to show him that so long as he had come into the family, I bore him no ill will, though I hadn't desired the wedding. With this in mind I went to his room. Upon receiving no answer when I knocked on the door, I decided that he had gone into the library for something. It is just opposite his apartment, you know, so I started across the hall. Just as I did so I saw my wife dart stealthily into the library as though desirous of not being seen. Needless to say I was surprised at her actions, and something telling me all was not well, I stepped just outside the door in time to hear John Clay exclaim: 'I tell you once and all, Marie, I'm going to marry her!' " The old man choked back a sob as he repeated the dead man's words, but instantly gaining composure, he continued:

"I went through hell in those few minutes I stood outside the door, for in that space of time I learned what my wife had been to that scoundrel, and that he had taken advantage of her good name, and inability to prevent it, to marry my child! That he was using my family as a stepping-stone to further his ambitions. I imagined a great deal more than actually was true. I saw myself a deluded, betrayed husband, the cur her lover, and I became blinded with sick, unholy anger. Only the lack of a weapon prevented my killing him then and there, and my wife as well. I was determined to save my daughter at any cost; so, although loth to leave them alone, I returned to my own room to get a revolver. In the length of time it took me to get it and return, Clay had gotten rid of my wife and gone to his own apartment. I walked into his room without knocking, and without preamble told him I had come to kill him."

Clevering drew a deep sigh and leaned forward, almost touching the older man in his interest in the recital.

"Clay was badly scared, though he tried to laugh it off. His laugh only maddened me more, for as he was in the act of swearing to me that my wife was true to me, I raised my revolver and pulled the trigger—I pulled the trigger, but the gun did not go off."

"Did not go off!" ejaculated the lawyer.

"No. In my intense anger and excitement I had forgotten to load it."

"But Clay was killed!" said Clevering in bewilderment.

"Yes, some one in the bathroom behind me took advantage of my intent to kill, and as I raised my gun the hidden marksman fired the shot that murdered him. I thought it was my pistol I heard, and it was only upon returning to my own room and finding the cartridges on my bureau where I had placed them when intending to use them, did I learn that some one else and not I had murdered John Clay!"

CHAPTER TWELVE

FOR several seconds Clevering continued to stare at the colonel in bewilderment, almost unable to comprehend a story which seemed incredible.

"But your revolver—was it the one the police found by the murdered man? That one had been fired?" he finally said, trying to piece Davidger's story with the evidence the detectives had secured.

"No, it wasn't my gun they found," replied the other. "I carried mine back to my room. After I realized that some one else had fired the shot which killed Clay, I returned to see what I could learn. I think I was about insane at the time, or I wouldn't have done so foolish a thing. But a fear that perhaps my wife had committed the crime made me retrace my steps. My first anger toward her had worn off, and all I felt was a desire to save her at any cost. I had presence of mind not to go back the way I had come. Subconsciously I realized it was snowing and that the snow would cover any tracks I made. I knew all the servants were occupied with the wedding ceremonies, and felt reasonably sure that Clay's body had not been discovered yet, and wouldn't be for some time, as Doris would be dressing. Feeling certain I would find my wife somewhere in Clay's apartment, I darted out the back way and up a stairway which led to a balustrade-like fire-escape just outside Clay's window. It was my footprints that McKay found later, though the snow had almost obliterated them. I had no trouble in raising the window and stepping inside. I think I was so dazed and miserable that it made little difference to me whether I were discovered or not. At least, my child was saved, and that was all I cared about. A hasty survey of the room showed it entirely empty save for the dead body on the floor. But beside it was the revolver which had taken his life. I examined this as calmly as though it were an everyday occurrence. I even examined Clay himself, and in so doing got blood upon my hands and on my trousers from kneeling beside him. I went into the bathroom, and in cleansing myself smeared blood upon a towel. This McKay also found, though I endeavored to wash off the stains with hot water. Regaining a little composure, I wiped all trace of finger-prints from the window-sill with the towel and hid it in the hamper for soiled linen. I figured so long as Clay had been removed so propitiously, I did not choose to be blamed for a crime I did not commit, unless it was proven to a certainty that my wife had done it. All doubts of her were removed, however, for as I flung open the door leading into the hallway, to make my exit the second time, I saw her standing on the landing in the floor below, talking to a group of young people. Although I marveled at her composure after the scene I had witnessed in the library, I knew it would have been an impossibility for her to have killed a man and then show such utter indifference. Likewise, she gave the appearance of having been some little time with her guests, in which case she could not have been in Clay's apartment at the same time I was. While I was unboundedly relieved to feel that she was safe on that score, I cursed myself as an unmitigated idiot for having jeopardized my safety and honor by returning to the scene of the crime."

The colonel hesitated and again wiped his damp forehead with his handkerchief. There had been little hesitancy in his recital, but Clevering realized the terrific strain under which he was laboring.

"Has Doris any suspicion of this?" Clevering asked, taking advantage of his silence.

"No, thank God!" the other replied. "And for her mother's sake she mustn't realize it. I'd go on the stand and swear I killed him over some trivial matter and take

the consequences rather than have her suspicious of her mother's integrity."

"You can't do that," said Clevering. "You would injure her just as much by branding her a murderer's daughter as by allowing her mother's indiscretions to be known."

"You're right!" muttered the old man. "You're right! But, my God! What am I to do? What ought I to do? You must not forget that they have fastened the crime on Mrs. Davidger."

"I have not forgotten," replied the lawyer. "I am so overwhelmed with the enormity of it I cannot think lucidly. Has Mrs. Davidger regained consciousness?"

"Yes, this morning she knew me and protested her innocence of any genuine infidelity to me, and I believe her, Clevering. She comes of that old New England stock which have committed indiscretions, but would never be guilty of unfaithfulness. Why didn't I realize that before? She thinks I killed Clay!" Colonel Davidger sprang to his feet, his face working spasmodically in the excess of his emotions.

"Blast this restless, excited age! These tangos and their lizards that rob women of their womanhood and destroy the moral stamina and backbone of our homes! I tell you, Clevering, this insane dancing craze and its attendant vices are demoralizing the whole race! Such men as John Clay are worse than murderers! They ought to be taken out and strung up, every damn one of them! Pandering on foolish women's vanity. Feeding their petty, flattery-loving souls with sweet, insidious poison, and we men permit it. We are glad our wives and daughters are amused, are pleased that some puppy will don a dress-suit and trot them around so that we may spend a few more hours money grubbing. Will we never wake up? Must homes all be shattered like mine before our eyes are opened?"

"Don't, old man, don't!" exclaimed Clevering, striving to quiet him, as the colonel seemed to lose all control of himself and to become almost insane in his denunciation of existing conditions.

"Why does Mrs. Davidger think you've anything to do with the murder?" the lawyer continued as his friend suddenly lapsed into silence, broken only by his labored breathing and the nervous tapping of his foot on the carpeted floor.

"After I left the apartment, and saw her speaking to the guests below, I called her apart from them, and, without preamble, said to her: 'I heard you and that scoundrel in the library, and want you to understand that I know the whole dirty mess, from beginning to end.' Before she could offer any protests I walked away, and at the same moment Doris' scream was heard from above and the murder was discovered. Naturally, the logical thing for her to believe was that, in defense of my honor, I killed him!"

Clevering admitted the truth of this statement.

"Now," continued the colonel, seemingly to have gained a grip on himself, "while she denies any actual infidelity, she feels that she in reality is guilty of John Clay's murder, though she believes that I fired the shot which took his life. I have repeated my innocence again and again to her, and have told her of how the intentions I had to kill him were thwarted. She refuses to believe me, reiterating that she assumes all the blame, as she is the guilty one, but for God's sake, to tell her the truth. What shall I do, Clevering? I appeal to you, not as to a lawyer, but as to a friend, a son, in fact. My one desire is to save Doris and our good name, even though I die for it."

Clevering wrung the older man's hand in an encouraging clasp, but before answering he crossed to the window and stood staring at the moving panorama six floors below. The hurry, flurry of the multitude crossing and recrossing the crowded street somehow impressed him with the futility of existence. The endless struggle for what? One man's burden, becoming too heavy for him, is shifted to another's shoulders, who, in turn, either breaks under it, or throwing back his chest, and looking skyward, transfers it to another. Twisting, turning, pausing, going backward or forward—it all ends where? And the man sitting in his office, with his affluence, his millions to command, was being tortured beyond human kind to endure.

"Who was guilty?" muttered the lawyer. As he turned to the colonel the telephone on the desk jangled discordantly, causing his ragged nerves to vibrate unpleasantly.

"Hello!" he called, taking down the receiver, then instantly becoming all attention as he recognized Doris' voice over the telephone.

"Mark, is it you?" she asked in a high-pitched, unnatural voice.

"Yes, dear!"

"Mark! Something terrible has happened. Mother has been arrested for John's murder, they've told her, and she is much worse. And the girl Anna is gone."

"Anna gone!" Clevering exclaimed in dismay.

"Yes. Can't you come to me? I'm almost distracted."

"Come right away!" Abruptly turning to his client, he said: "That was Doris; it is imperative for us to return to your house at once. Is your car below?"

"Not my wife?" gasped the colonel, catching his arm, his white lips quivering. "She isn't dead—not dying?"

"No, no!" shaking him off. "It's something else, of vital importance, and until it's settled we'll let the matter of your implication in the murder rest.'

Followed by the colonel, he rushed from his office, down the elevator, and into the machine standing at the curb.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DORIS admitted them. She had evidently been watching for their arrival from the drawing-room window, for before the colonel could insert his key she had flung open the door.

During the twenty-four hours since Clevering had last seen her she had changed terribly. Dark shadows of anxiety encircled her beautiful eyes, lines of suffering were drawn about her lips, and the black gown she wore seemed to accentuate an almost unearthly pallor, and gave her small chiseled face an ethereal beauty which hurt Clevering.

She placed her small, cold hand in his, and in silence drew him into the hallway. At her father's anxious question regarding her mother's condition, she shook her head doubtfully.

"She is very ill, dad! This arrest has almost killed her! It's so cruel, so unjust, and so impossibly ridiculous! Why should mother kill John Clay? She didn't know he was married, as I do."

"Married!" ejaculated the colonel interrogatively. Clevering hastened to explain what they had learned the day before, and the colonel muttered under his breath several times: "The damn scoundrel! The damn scoundrel!"

"They've stationed an officer just outside mother's door," continued Doris bitterly, "and have put a woman in charge, so we can't even be alone with her! It's insufferable! Just as though she would try to run away—even if she could! And the funeral will take place in an hour!"

"I had forgotten all about it," exclaimed Colonel Davidger. "I'll be glad when his loathsome body is out of the house and given over to the worms."

Doris shuddered, but she made no comment. When her father remarked that he was going up to his wife, she drew aside to let him pass; then, when he was gone, she turned impulsively to Clevering:

"Mark, why have they arrested mother? What is it all about? Something is being hidden from me. I must know the truth; won't you tell me?"

For an instant the lawyer was at a loss just how to reply, then drawing her into the drawing-room, and seating himself beside her on a long, low lounge, he answered very gently:

"Doris, something has occurred which is best that you should never know. I ask by the love you have for your parents and for me, never to mention it. Of this be assured—your mother is absolutely innocent of Clay's mur-

der, and so is your father, and her innocence can very shortly be proven. When that is done, this whole thing must be as a sealed book. Clay has been miraculously taken out of your life before he did you any great wrong, and must be absolutely forgotten. As soon as it is possible for us to do so, we shall be married, and, please God, I'll try to make you happy."

The girl drew a deep sigh and nestled against him. Her dark head rested on his shoulder, and for a few blissful moments the sordid present was swept aside, as the future, glowing with rosy promise, appeared before them.

Then Clevering broke the silence. "But we can't lose precious moments and dream of that time, dear; there is too much more to be done. The girl Anna must be found first of all, for upon her hinges the entire evidence with which to prove your mother's innocence. When did she disappear?"

"I don't know exactly. Louise came running to me frantically just before I telephoned to you and said her sister was gone and that she was afraid she had killed herself. She had left her alone only a few minutes to get her something to eat, and when she returned the girl had disappeared."

"Hem!" Clevering studied a few moments. "What made Louise think she might have taken her own life?"

"I don't know. I think she left a letter."

"Did you see it?"

"No, I didn't." She looked at him questioningly, for Clevering's eyes suddenly glowed, and he sprang abruptly to his feet.

"Come on, we'll go to see Louise," he said.

They found the girl crouched on a foot-stool in her room sobbing as though her heart would break, while her sweetheart, Armonde, was endeavoring in vain to quiet her. She started up in sheer terror when she saw that Clevering was with Doris.

"Where's your sister?" the lawyer asked abruptly.

"I don't know," wailed the girl, "but she's dead."

"What makes you think that?"

Louise refused to answer, and with a show of severity not in accord with his usual kindly bearing, Clevering put his hand on her shoulder and forced her to look in his face.

"Where is the letter she left for you?" he demanded.

"There ain't any letter—what letter?" stammered the maid incoherently. "She didn't leave any letter for me."

Taking a chance on deduction, Clevering continued forcefully: "Yes, she did. Don't lie. I know all about her leaving a letter for you."

The maid's red-rimmed eyes stared at him in amazement, while her sweetheart said softly:

"Better hand it over, Lou; it can't hurt her none now, anyway."

"Mebbe she ain't dead!" sobbed Louise, clinging to him. "Mebbe she's still alive! Oh, Gawd, what'll you do to her if she is, and her that long suffering?" She tried to pull away from Clevering, but he held her firmly.

"I won't have any nonsense," he said harshly. "If you refuse to give it to me I'll call one of the detectives up from downstairs. Perhaps when you are under arrest you will do as they say."

The maid reached in the front of her blouse and drew out a tear-stained, crumpled piece of paper. She, however, did not face her questioner as he read what was written upon it.

Only a few mis-spelled sentences, but they solved the mystery and told the tale of a broken heart and a misspent life. It read:

"DEAR LOU: I don't want you to cry, or feel bad about me, for I'm not worth it. Anyway, I'm just a burden to you. I can't stand it to live without him and baby. I acted as if I didn't love him, but I did, though he made me so mad I couldn't bear it. I've got all them morphine tablets the doctor give me, and when you get this I'll be sound asleep with Clay. I ain't afraid. Mebbe when he knows how much I loved him he'll be different and forgive me, 'cause I killed him, Lou. I lied when I said I only seen him through the door dead. I went in his room when he was alive and talked to him. He called me awful names, choked me, and it drove me crazy. Then Colonel Davidger came to his door, and John hid me in the bathroom till he was gone. There was a revolver in the cabinet there, and I picked it up and looked at it. Then, when I heard what Colonel Davidger said to him, I saw red. I saw the colonel raise a gun, too, and I thought he was gonna kill him. Somehow it made me want to kill him first. I pulled the trigger, and he dropped over dead. The colonel thought he'd killed him and run away, and I run out, too, and found you—and told you I'd seen John dead. That's the truth. Forgive me and pray for me. Your heart-broken sister, ANNA CLAIBORNE."

Clevering drew a deep sigh, and turning toward the sobbing Louise, placed the scrap of paper in his pocket.

"What are you gonna do?" the girl gasped.

"Give this to the police," he said softly, the note of kindness in his voice robbing his words of any harshness.

"No! No!" the girl cried in terror. "S'pose'n she ain't dead! They'll arrest her! They'll send her to the chair! Oh, for Gawd's sake, Mr. Clevering, don't do that!"

"I'm very sorry, Louise, but I must do it. If your sister has done as she threatened, she is beyond reach of any police now. We must hunt for her."

The maid looked dazed. She did not seem to comprehend what he intended doing, for she whispered: "Where—where?" several times.

"She said 'I'll be with him.'" said Doris, softly touching Clevering on the arm.

"Are you equal to it?" he inquired. She nodded assent.

"It is best before any one arrives," she replied.

"Wait here. I'll call an officer to go with us," said the lawyer.

Very quickly he descended the stairs where he found Moran again on duty, this time in front of Mrs. Davidger's door. The lawyer showed him Anna's confession, and softly, so that the sick woman inside could not hear, asked him to go to John Clay's apartment with him. Doris joined them, and they made the trip.

It was as Clevering surmised.

Anna had made all preparations before taking the final plunge. There on the bed she lay side by side with her faithless husband, her head resting on the same pillow, her arms about his rigid form, while she had pulled the sheet which covered him about her own body. Her red-gold hair lay in a matted cluster on the pillow, and her wide, baby eyes glared into space with the glazed, glassy stare of death. But a tiny flush still lingered on the pretty, petulant face and gave her the appearance of sleep. Doris choked back a sob.

"Poor little thing," she whispered. "Come away, Mark, I can't stand it."

John Clay's funeral did not take place until the next day, and with him was buried the woman who had loved and killed him.

The newspaper headlines announced that the murderer of John Clay had been discovered in the person of a discarded sweetheart, who had afterwards committed suicide, and commented no further upon the tragedy.

With a delicacy which the Colonel fully appreciated, Inspector McKay, in his presence, destroyed Mrs. Davidger's tell-tale letters, and returned the jeweled comb, thus indicating that the matter was a closed book. And when Moran sheepishly announced his intention of marrying Rosalie, saying she was a good scout, and on the level, Clevering knew that the Davidger secret was safe for all time.

A few months later Mrs. Davidger was restored to health, although she never became her normal self again, despite the colonel's solicitude and infinite forgiving tenderness. Then Clevering and Doris were married.

Read the story "A Skillful Job," out in our January 1st edition.

AN AUTOMOBILE CASE

By WILL H. GREENFIELD

FORREST BRUCE, captain of detectives, smiled tolerantly at Grant Pepper and patiently proceeded for the fifth time to recount the case in hand.

"Wesley is your friend, Grant," he began, "and you refuse to ignore the personal equation. The newspapers are making much of the great automobile murder, as they call it, but to me it seems very easy of solution. What is there to it? Stanton Oliver, driving away from Fairmount Inn in his automobile with the wife of Harry Wesley, the great second-baseman, is struck down by a man who leaps on the running-board of the car with a clubbed revolver in his hand. Having what is known as a paper skull, Oliver gives up the ghost without making the usual mess—pegs out with nothing but a bruised indentation on his forehead to show where his assassin struck him. Quite in keeping with his fussy mode of life, this—a quick, clean finish. West, the driver of the car, positively identifies Wesley as the man who leaped at Oliver from the roadside. The woman herself says it was Wesley, only saying, as the accused says, that he did not strike the fatal blow, or at least that she didn't see the blow struck. And Wesley says he jumped at his victim, crying 'Damn you!' and that Oliver collapsed before he could assault him."

"But West, the chauffeur, says Wesley cried 'Look out'!" said Grant Pepper.

"That's quite likely, too," smiled Captain Bruce. "It gives the case a natural look. You must agree that it is well known that no two witnesses of the same incident will coincide in their description of it. It appears very likely that no two men would hear the same thing. As between a man bent on murder and a sober, level-headed man intent only on getting his car along a suburban road, I should think the latter would be more apt to remember with fidelity the words uttered on such an occasion. The noise of the running car was not great enough to render shouted words indistinct. Wesley, I grant you, is anything but the hardened criminal. He may have meant to shout 'Damn you'! but the testimony of West proves conclusively that he didn't. This point is one of very minor importance, at any rate. You must show something better, Grant, or I shall never make a detective of you."

Grant Pepper laughed softly and caressed his knees with his hands.

"I guess I'm a better auto racer than a detective," he said placidly, "but I simply cannot believe Harry Wesley capable of a murderous passion. You see, captain, I know this man pretty well. Why, in the baseball world, he is known as 'Lady' Wesley. You couldn't get his teammates to say he would harm a fly. In voice and manner, he is, and always was, almost effeminate. You yourself have heard him coach to the accompaniment of the bleachers' jeers. They admired his great ability, but they never could sit silent and listen to a man with a tenor-speaking voice!"

"When you have had my experience, Grant, you will learn not to be surprised at some of the things that are done by lady-like men!"

"But, captain, Harry had an unloaded revolver!"

"And Stanton Oliver," rejoined Forrest Bruce grimly, "had a paper skull. The revolver, remember, wasn't fired. No other weapon was found near the scene or in the car. The coroner's physician has said that it took only a love tap to do the job, and you must admit that Harry Wesley could have administered such a caress."

"Maybe it's because he's my friend, but there are some things about the case that look queer to me." Grant Pepper pretended not to see the amused smile on the detective's face and went on, musingly: "Why, Mrs. Wesley herself might be the victim of circumstances and baseless scandal."

"Don't be simple," jeered Forrest Bruce. "Stanton Oliver was a Lovelace of long experience, and formed to please a woman's fancy. He was six-feet-two of comely manhood and beside him Harry Wesley was a dwarf whose unattractiveness palled upon his pretty little wife. She was infatuated with Oliver and ready to do his every bidding. Their affair was one of long standing, but, like the iceberg, showed little on the surface. Very few unfaithful wives, Grant, are so regarded by the world. Women of professed respectability do not keep an assignation accompanied by a brass band, nor advertise their amours in the public prints. There are millions of wives who are, and well deserve to be, as far above suspicion as Cæsar's spouse; but could all the husbands be wafted above the city like Don Cleofas, and look with magic vision through every roof and wall, the divorce courts and funeral directors would experience a business boom."

"But if Mrs. Wesley loved Oliver so intensely," challenged Grant, "why should she protect the man who murdered him, even though it were her husband? She says she saw no blow struck, and she sat beside the murdered man."

"She also says that they had just swerved from Fairmount Road into Woodbridge Pike, and the turn had jolted her head back and to one side. Fairmount Road was illuminated by the gate lamps of the inn, but Woodbridge Pike was in darkness. It was at the turn that Harry Wesley emerged from ambush, swung himself onto the car and, as I firmly believe, dealt the blow that killed Stanton Oliver."

Grant Pepper got to his feet and stretched arms and legs with a lithe movement that denoted the trained athlete. Under his calm grace of manner was a ripple of concealed excitement.

"And this man bent on murder," he cooed, "lying in ambush to kill the destroyer of his home, springs out from the dark to commit the red deed—with an unloaded revolver! I can't see it, captain."

"In his excitement," illustrated Forrest Bruce, "he tried to use the revolver just as he had purchased it. When it failed to explode, he clubbed it. He is not one of the cool, calculating class of criminals, Grant, and he was insanely jealous of his wife."

"I'm going out to the scene of the crime, captain. Do you mind?"

"Not at all. Wish you luck. We would have been

there long ago had there been any necessity for it, but there isn't. The case is complete."

"Not to my mind," disagreed Grant Pepper, going to the door. "I'll see you this evening some time. So long!"

But instead of going out to Fairmount Inn, Grant Pepper concluded that he would first call upon Mrs. Harry Wesley, who was being detained at Central Station as a witness. His association with Forrest Bruce and more or less intimate acquaintance with other police officials, who regarded him as a highly enthusiastic but likably harmless amateur sleuth, rendered this task an easy one. Mrs. Wesley was delighted—and scarlet—at the sight of him.

"You are going to help Harry, Mr. Pepper!" she cried. "Don't say there is no hope. You will help Harry—for my sake?"

"For his own sake, madam," he amended, and dropped her hand as she dropped her eyes.

Florence Wesley was beautiful beyond a doubt. Her pale, clear-cut features would have been a fitting study for any sculptor, but a painter must have paused, brush in hand, when he came to paint her eyes. To portray these faithfully with their intense and ever-varying expression would be nothing less than an impossibility. Magnificent in color and form, their peculiar brilliancy was so pronounced that they repelled and attracted one at the same time.

"Mrs. Wesley," said Grant abruptly, "I wish you would answer a few questions for me. Can you remember—take your time, now, and think hard—can you remember what Wesley cried out when he boarded the car you were in?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Pepper," she replied after a thoughtful pause. "Harry cried 'Damn you!' "

"Ah! He didn't call 'Look out!' then?"

"Why, no; I thought it was West who cried 'Look out!' "

"But some one did shout those words?"

"Yes, indeed; but I am positive it was not Mr. Wesley."

Grant paused for a moment as a chess player pauses over a move.

"Now, when Harry jumped into the car, he had a revolver in his hand. Which end of that revolver did you see?"

Mrs. Wesley lifted her eyebrows in amusement.

"Why, the business end," she laughed musically. "He shoved the barrel of it almost—almost into Mr. Oliver's face."

"Almost, eh? Then he had the revolver by the stock, of course. Did Harry keep a revolver about the house?"

"No; never."

That concluded Grant Pepper's interview with the woman in the case. His next move was to gain an audience with the alleged slayer, Harry Wesley, and though this was not quite so facile of accomplishment, it was managed without a great deal of difficulty.

Harry Wesley was a small, blonde, youngish man with a frank, ingenuous face and pert, sparrow-like movements. His voice was piccolo, but warm and vibrant.

"Grant, this is mighty fine of you!" he fluttered. "How is Florence taking it?"

Pepper smothered a sardonic smile before answering: "Just came from her, Harry. She's hopeful and repentant. I'm after your plain and unvarnished story. Do I get it?"

"Every bit of it, old timer," was the prisoner's response in a voice that trembled with delight. "I don't mind going to the chair for Oliver, but I swear to you that I didn't kill him."

"Just take it easy, Harry," cautioned Pepper. "Come clean with me about last Tuesday night's happenings and everything will be all right. Now, out with it, old boy; your friends are sticking like a summer cold."

Wesley dashed the teardrops from his dark-circled eyes, fought for control of his voice, and finally began:

"I had been tipped off a week before about Florence and Oliver, but I could not believe what I heard. My informant was anonymous and communicated with me by telephone. Tuesday afternoon he waited for me after the game and told me that he was the father of a girl whom Oliver had deserted. He said his name was Hunter. He could neither read nor write, and scarcely hear, for he had been a boilermaker in his earlier years. He admitted that he had meant to slay Oliver with an air-gun, but when he discovered the scoundrel's relations with my wife he thought it would be better to expose him to the world. In fact, he admitted that he thought the extinction of Oliver was a job for a younger man. He told me about the engagement at the Fairmount Inn for that evening, and even offered to let me have his air-gun. But I went out and bought a gun of my own, and then like an ass neglected to load it."

"Just a moment, Harry," interpolated Pepper quickly. "You knew the gun wasn't loaded when you dashed at Oliver Tuesday night?"

"Certainly," replied Wesley readily. "Hunter and I saw the meeting at the inn, and then went down the road to talk about things, for he was so deaf it wasn't safe to hold a conversation with him anywhere around the place. We had stopped on Woodbridge Pike and settled that we should kill Oliver the next night with Hunter's air-gun. At that moment we heard the car coming along. We dodged behind a big pile of paving-stones and wouldn't have been seen if I had kept my head. I think Hunter kept right on traveling, for when I looked about me I couldn't see him. Then the car shot around the bend, and in the flash of white that cut through the gloom from the inn's arclights I saw Stanton Oliver—and Florence. I rushed out, pulling the revolver from my pocket. I grabbed the side of the car, swung myself aboard and—you know the rest."

"Not yet," said Pepper dryly; "not yet, but soon. Go on with the tale."

"I cursed at Oliver," continued Wesley in a slow, sober voice, "and I jammed the gun at his face, but as I did so he gave a groan and collapsed. I swear to you, Grant, I didn't even touch him with the barrel of the gun. I didn't have it clubbed, as Captain Bruce says I had. Florence can bear me out in that. I haven't said a word about Hunter, because we plotted murder together, and there's no use getting him into trouble. I want you to leave him out of it, too, for I pity him, and he didn't have anything to do with it."

Grant Pepper was watching him narrowly as he concluded, but his face did not alter in the least as he said: "Harry, I know the boys poke fun at me for the interest I take in my hobby, and I have previously rode the detective business as a hobby. But when a friend of mine is accused of a murder I am satisfied he did not commit, I am going to make that hobby my business."

"Do you think I have a chance, Grant?"

"I certainly do. Now, listen to me. Did you hear a shout when you jumped for Oliver?"

"Yes, I did," answered Wesley. "Somebody shouted 'Look out!' I thought it was Hunter, but now that I come to think of it, it might have been West, the chauffeur. I was too excited to distinguish the voice."

"That's the job I have ahead of me," said Grant Pep-

per quietly. "Your wife says you cried 'Damn you!' and somebody shouted 'Look out!' It wasn't you; it wasn't West; and it wasn't Stanton Oliver. It seems to be up to this amateur automobile detective to capture a voice from the air. I'm off, Harry. Be of good cheer while I run out to the Fairmount Inn and then have a little chat with West, the chauffeur."

An hour before midnight Captain of Detectives Bruce opened the door of his private office at City Hall to admit, with a smile that was unequivocally sarcastic, the weary and bedraggled form of Grant Pepper.

"Fresh from the scene of the crime, eh?" he chuckled maliciously. "My boy, you must learn that there are hundreds of cases wherein a glimpse of the actual scene of crime is neither requisite nor—er—defensible."

"Well," panted Grant Pepper, dropping into the nearest chair, "I have a very good defense. I chased out to Fairmount Inn, picked up everything I was looking for, and just now left Jimmy West, the chauffeur, who admitted that the voice that called 'Look out!' could not by any manner of means have been the shrill tone of Lady Wesley. In fact, West says the voice was hoarse and harness-broke and had a touch of Irish brogue."

Forrest Bruce sniffed audibly as his protégé smiled a knowing smile.

Pepper's knowing smile increased in its quality of knowingness and he spoke with an inflection that was quite baffling.

"Will you demand the climax now, captain?" he purred.

"Sure!" exploded Forrest Bruce. "If you can take Harry Wesley out of jail and make a fool out of me, go to it!"

"Very well, captain, you may send out word to apprehend a man holding a telephone receiver on top of his head while standing in front of the mouthpiece!"

"What do you want me to do?" demanded Forrest Bruce, in the tone of one trying to do a sum.

"When you've got your man, send for me. Just at present I need some sleep."

The following afternoon, a little after four o'clock, Grant Pepper appeared at City Hall in response to a hasty summons from Captain Bruce.

"We have a freak like you want," said the latter briefly. "Now let me know what you know before we proceed with the circus."

Grant Pepper disposed himself comfortably in a chair, lighted a cigar, puffed vigorously for a few seconds, and then began:

"When I went out to Fairmount Inn I discovered at the junction of Woodbridge Pike and Fairmount Road a pile of paving-stones. On an iron bar projecting from the side swung a red lantern which could not have been there Tuesday night. I looked about for the watchman, and when I found him I learned that he had gone to work Wednesday. At the inn a hostler told me that the man who was on duty Tuesday night had drawn his money Wednesday morning and quit the job. When I asked the hostler how I could pick this man out of a crowd he laughed. 'Can't miss him,' he said, 'if he happens to be telephoning. His name's Mike and he was born without folds in his ears. He puts the receiver on top of his head to hear.' Now, captain, let me tell you about Hunter and his air-gun."

Pepper related rapidly and succinctly the story he had received from Harry Wesley, and at its conclusion Forrest Bruce said:

"Hunter didn't have his air-gun, but there was nothing to prevent him from climbing that pile of paving stones and using one of them to dent the paper skull of Stanton Oliver. He was working for that paving company as watchman while waiting for his revenge. We'll have Harry Wesley brought here, and then I'll bring in Mike Hunter."

Grant Pepper smiled and nodded. Harry Wesley, his face radiant at the news they had for him, listened attentively to Captain Bruce's instructions.

"I'll tell you if it is the man," he said quickly, "but I don't think——"

"We'll do the thinking," cut in Captain Bruce, and commanded two of his subordinates to bring in the prisoner.

When the door opened again it was to admit a huge, slouching, freckled man with a cadaverous, whimsical countenance and malformed ears. He was manacled to two detectives and stared at the stern faces in front of him with slack jaw.

"This is not Mike Hunter!" declared Harry Wesley with decision.

"Ain't it?" cried Captain Bruce with sudden animation. "There, Pepper, you speed king, there's the murderer you brought under the wire to beat us!"

"But I haven't said this man was a murderer, captain," said Grant calmly. "I accepted your challenge to take Harry Wesley out of jail and prove that you had the automobile murder by the wrong end. In fact," he concluded in a loud voice, "I have never believed there was a murder committed!"

"Thank you, sor!" blurted the prisoner. "'Twas criminal careless of me, I know, but when I climbed the stones to hang out the red lamp 'twas sthill a good ten minutes afore dark, an' bein' woozy wid the ale of the inn I was nappin' it on top whin I heard voices and the roar of a car rushin' around the turn. I yelled 'Look out!' an' for a second thought none would be hurt, they were all so small in the car an' the iron hung so high, but it caught the big fellow smack an'—an'——"

"That's enough!" cried Captain Bruce. "Pepper, when auto racing gets too dull for you, apply to me for a job."

Another exciting story by Will H. Greenfield coming in our next number. Watch for it!

SPECIAL NOTICE

Please give your newsdealer a standing order for your semi-monthly copy of "MYSTERY MAGAZINE." The War Industries Board has asked all publishers to save waste. Newsdealers must, therefore, be informed if you intend to get a copy of this magazine every two weeks, so they will know how many copies to order from us.

THE SEAL USED ON OUR PAPER MONEY

A RELIC of the Revolutionary days when we were not yet a nation still remains on our paper money, says *Popular Science Monthly*. The seal which appears on every bill issued by the government contains the abbreviated words "Thesaur. Amer. Septent. Sigil." The full phrase is "Thesaui Americana Septentrionalis Sigillum," which simply means, "Seal of the Treasury of North America." Our distinguished ancestors seemed to feel that if a thing were to be said with dignity, it had to be said in Latin.

THE MISSING WATCH

By INEZ LOPEZ

I'M not a fanatic, nor am I engaged in the practise of law for health's sake, but the conduct of juries in the face of circumstantial evidence gets my goat! Slangy? Sure, but it gets my meaning across better than any other expression.

It is a tremendous problem. Theoretically our jury system is perfect, in actual practise it is sheer rot. Maybe the day will come when we won't choose our jurymen from the ranks of soda-jerkers and bums; there will be certain qualifying tests; the indicted man will truly face a jury of his peers—twelve men versed in the sciences and especially in psychology. A juror may not be an ordinary individual, he should be thoughtful enough to dissociate his emotional from his analytic self.

A jury is swayed by circumstantial evidence, because that type of testimony presents something which the average mentality can grasp. Don't smile. I believe I'm pretty well up to the mental average, yet I've had an experience. A dream, a mere figment of a distorted imagination, mind you, has implanted in my mind a doubt I cannot shake, try as I will. And—but I'd better tell you the whole thing as it happened. You'll understand it better then.

Of course, you've heard me speak of Warren Harding. The friendship between that lad and myself was of the Damon-and-Pythias and the David-and-Jonathan types. There is but one word which describes him: lovable. Curly haired, blue-eyed, trustful; a man liked by men and adored by women. We were inseparable through college and for years afterwards.

We were separated for a while right after graduation when he came East here to seek his fortune and I stepped into the offices of Estes Brothers at home, which position I occupied when my father died.

The settling of father's estate netted me a lot of liabilities, where I had thought to receive a pretty comfortable little nest-egg. About all that was left to me when the debts were cleared up and the administration expenses paid was the one heirloom to which my dad, bless him, had sentimentally clung.

It was a watch; but what a watch! It was dated at the period when watches were invented rather than manufactured. You've seen 'em: big as a small clock, weighted down with enough gold to be valuable as bullion, and with the in'ards containing an entire orchestra and a dozen didoes which in the early days of watch-making were accepted as final evidence of the value of the timepiece. Watches of that type are rare now, and very valuable as curios. But, even aside from its value as a curio, it had intrinsic worth for the gold in its case and the jewels with which it was studded—enough to start a modest jewelry store. But as it was a patent impossibility to lug the thing around as a timepiece, I brought it East with me and stuck it away in a little desk compartment. I would have put it in a safe deposit vault, but I liked to take it out once in a while and look at it, just as my dad used to do. He loved that watch for its history and associations, and I loved it because he did.

I think the principal reason I came to New York was because Warren was here and the world was open to me; one place being as good as another. Fortunately, I made good in a worldly way. Warren was less lucky. He worked at a job; his employment was on the wrong side of the borderline separating a position and a job. He received a pittance for his labors, and only his ultra-fastidiousness kept him from appearing seedy.

The worst of it was that he was supporting an aged mother and an extravagant and rather selfish little sister, just budding into womanhood and carving the geegaws which delight the feminine heart, nor pausing to think at what sacrifice they were provided. It was a case of grind, grind, grind for Warren, and the dependence of mother and sister made it impossible for him to break away and try to shove himself into a more lucrative job. He was tied down tight and facing an outlook on life about the general hue of a ten-cent store turquoise.

He was of a sunny disposition, but intensely temperamental. Let things break right—little things—and he'd grin in the face of adversity. Let 'em go wrong and he plumbed the nethermost depths of mental travail. His optimistic temperament fell just a wee mite short of balancing the scales.

Things ran along pretty well until he got the idea that the cosmic scheme was all wrong. He claimed that the world owed him a living. And when a man's thoughts run in those channels, it is a symptom of mental ill health.

Two days before the occurrence at which I am driving Warren dropped into my rooms. He appeared dejected and disgusted, and he swore softly and bitterly at things in general as he threw himself on the bed. A wire, it seems, had come that day telling him that his mother was ill, and he was going to her. Nor was he at all certain that he would return.

"What's the use," he said wearily. "I can make as little anywhere else as I'm making here. The whole world is against me. I'm a misfit. There isn't a chance for me. And right now I'm so deeply in debt I couldn't buy a ticket to the lower regions unless a winter excursion was on."

"I've fifty I can spare——"

"Fifty! My God, man! I've nearly five hundred in pressing debts. Oh! I'll take the fifty if you can spare it; though it isn't a drop in the bucket. I'm much obliged —it will help, of course. There are debts which need clearing up before I leave here. Sometimes I get desperate—— Bah!" The door slammed behind him.

Seems like I'm off on a sidetrack, eh? I'm not. I've told you all this so that you will see why the poor kid was in my thoughts so constantly during the following forty-eight hours.

I had intended seeing Warren next day and try to devise a plan to tide him over his financial crisis. I would have helped him personally, but I had less than a hundred in ready cash, and I had already loaned him fifty of that. Every other cent of surplus was tied up in a big deal I had on foot. And it was that very deal which called me out of town the following day.

I returned home the evening of the second day after my talk with Warren. It was a bleak, biting November night, made almost unbearable by one of those nasty drizzles which transform the world into a huge puddle of cold mud. And I'm sensitive to weather. So is Warren. It makes me grumpy and it now makes him sullen and desperate. I could envision him as I gazed through the murk of the evening, and, knowing he would need cheering up, I telephoned his office to learn that he had resigned and already left their employ. I telephoned his boarding-house and the landlady told me that he had already left and that his trunk had preceded him. The fact remains that I did not find Warren, but when I returned to my rooms after dinner I met Jim Hammond, a mutual friend.

"I just told your friend good-by," commented Hammond idly.

"My friend?"

"Warren Harding, of course. I met him on the way to the station. He told me his mother was ill and he seemed so down in the mouth that I went with him to the depot."

Disconsolately I found my way to my rooms. Cheerless as Warren would have been on such a night, I had rather counted on having him with me; we're such good pals. Well, he'd left the city at last.

My rooms were dankly uncomfortable. In the first place, the doors and windows had been tightly closed since my departure the previous morning and the atmosphere of the rooms was of a damp, chilly mustiness. I shivered as I climbed into my dressing gown and slippers.

I crossed uncomfortably to the window and stared into the night. The arc lights at the corners glowed like balls of molten metal through the mist. An elevated train sizzed by a half-block away, vanishing with its heterogeneous crew of passengers into the haze. An apparently penniless night wanderer huddled in the lee of a saloon's storm door and cast envious glances at the brilliantly lighted interior. Eventually he threw his shoulders back and entered with assumed boldness—only to make a precipitate exit a few minutes later. He sloshed sadly up the street. I was nervous, overwrought and cold. The bed offered the only haven of warmth or comfort visible. I turned in.

For a long time I pitched and tossed, trying to find a spot on the mattress less uncomfortable than that on which I lay. And I guess I dropped off to sleep——

Which brings me to the strange part of the tale. It has to do with my dream.

A dream is itself an occurrence with me; they are very rare. I enjoy nearly perfect health and my sleep is invariably of the totally unconscious kind. But there is a type of mental exhaustion which seems to set in motion the secondary machinery of the brain—and a dream came to me that night; dreams, to be more precise.

Almost immediately after dropping off to sleep I found myself in the street and apparently the only person of the throng not possessed of an umbrella. Many people had two, and some even three, but I found myself unable to ask the loan of one. And just as I had realized that I was too soaked to derive benefit from the use of an umbrella, a severe peal of late fall thunder awakened me and I found one of the windows of my bedroom, a window which opened onto a tiny balcony, sprawling! The rain was pouring in and the coverlets of my bed were unpleasantly wet.

I bolted the window—I almost said I bolted the window again, for I would have sworn that I fastened it before retiring—and crawled disconsolately between the clammy sheets. Again I dropped into a troubled slumber, and this time was transported by my dream to a ruined hut, apparently a million miles from nowhere.

Around me were the indelible thumb-prints of abject poverty; poverty of the kind one reads about, but seldom sees. The floor, where it was not knotty and rough, was filled with gaping holes; the plaster of walls and ceiling was cracked and sagging dangerously. The place was barren of furniture.

Of course, in the vagary of the dream, I was not surprised to find myself there. One never is surprised in dreams. I remember that I stood there pondering on ways and means for protection against the storm when the door slammed back, rain and streams of ground-water swirled into the room, and a man leaped into the room from the darkness.

I was not startled. At first he looked strangely like the man whom I had seen outside the saloon on the corner. Then I stiffened.

I found myself looking into the gaping, unwavering muzzle of a huge revolver. And from the stranger's lips came the barking command of "Hands up!"

I obeyed instantly, and I smiled.

"Keep those hands up—way up! Else there'll be trouble!"

I had not the slightest intention of disobeying. I kept my hands extended rigidly above my head.

The dream changed again, and because it was a dream, and because I was a figment of my own brain, I was not surprised to find myself once more in my own room. The masked man was there, too, and he kept me covered as he swiftly backed to my desk and opened it. Deftly his fingers pulled open the little drawer at the back. He paid not the slightest attention to the mass of papers there, but with the surety of predetermination took out the huge, valuable watch which I have already described.

I spoke in spite of myself.

"Hold on there——" The rain moaned outside. A particularly vicious blast of wind cut into the room, bit through the bedclothes, and tore the mask from the face of my dream burglar.

"Good God!" I gasped. "Warren!"

A dash. A slam. Another crash of thunder. I awakened to find myself sitting up straight in bed, trembling like a leaf and covered with cold perspiration. My hands were held rigidly above my head. Again the window—the window which I had so carefully bolted for the second time—was open and the rain was driving into the room.

I was shaken to the core. I admit it frankly. Never had a dream so affected me. I slipped on dressing-gown and slippers. I closed the mysteriously open window and again bolted it. Then I crossed to my desk. I opened the drawer at the back of my desk. The papers were disarranged, but all there. The watch was gone.

I gave the room a quick survey. As turned, my foot touched something light. It was a black mask!

And there's my story. Perhaps now you see what I mean. Jim Hammond had seen Warren leave the city hours before my watch was stolen; Warren, my best friend.

And yet, because of a dream, a bit of psychic phenomena which a scientist might readily explain—because of that dream, I would hate to be in the position of juror with Warren Harding facing me under indictment for burglary!

We are going to publish an intensely interesting poker story in the next issue of this magazine. It is by a well-known writer.

HIS TWIN BROTHER

By ROBERT H. F. WHITE

I ALWAYS had my suspicions of Jake Burtell," remarked Chief of Police Pellington to his wife, shortly after the undertaker had been sent to prison for implication in the Nixon affair. "He was a nice coroner for the people to elect, I must say!" continued the chief. "I shouldn't wonder but what many a sudden and mysterious death could be laid at old Jake's door, with the able assistance of Doc Conway. Marbletown won't see much of Conway for a good twenty years anyway, that's one good thing." He studied a moment. "Do you remember Abner McCurdy, Maria?" he asked.

"Who died so suddenly a few years ago?"

"The same. You know, Burtell was the undertaker in that case, and somehow I've always been curious about McCurdy's death. At that time I was not so wise as I am now, otherwise I might have looked into it a little deeper. You know, Abner was pretty heavily insured, besides being quite rich as well."

"So I had heard." Mrs. Pellington was always an appreciative audience for the chief.

"I'm going to find out how much insurance Abner really carried and to whom it was paid," the chief announced. "No doubt his twin brother, Douglas, got it, but it will do no harm to know."

He walked to the telephone on the wall and called up the Eastern Insurance Company.

"Hello!" boomed the chief. "This is Chief Pellington. Something like ten years ago one Abner McCurdy died here suddenly. I understand he carried considerable insurance in your company. Can you tell me when and to whom that money was paid, and how much it was?"

"That claim has never been presented for some reason, and, of course, has not been paid," stated the manager in a few moments. "McCurdy was insured for fifty thousand dollars."

"H-m-m!" mused the chief. Then he thanked the manager and rang off. "Now isn't that strange," he remarked to his wife, repeating the conversation to her.

"Very."

"I'll drop around and see McCurdy's brother and draw him out on this," he made up his mind at once.

Chief Pellington was nothing if not blunt. He called at Douglas McCurdy's real estate office that very day.

"Why didn't you ever collect your brother's insurance?" he asked promptly and point-blank after the greeting, thereby taking the man completely off his feet, which was his intention.

"Why—er—er—you see," McCurdy stammered, "I—er—er—well, you see—just a minute, please." He turned apparently to give some instructions to a clerk. It looked to the chief as though McCurdy was sparring for a breathing spell. Presently he turned smilingly to the chief. "Why, you know, I didn't know about any policy of insurance," he said glibly. "That explains the matter. Had I known, you know——"

"That's strange," mused the chief. "I understand you were the beneficiary in a large policy."

"I?" exclaimed McCurdy. "That's news to me, chief, I assure you. I'll have to look into this thing. How much was he insured for?"

"Fifty thousand dollars."

"Whew! Fifty thousand dollars!"

His exclamations did not sound natural to the chief.

"It's none of my business, of course," observed the chief, "but fifty thousand dollars is not picked up every day, and in view of the fact that your brother's death was so sudden, it seemed to me rather strange, when I learned that no claim had ever been put in for the insurance money. For your own protection, I would advise you to collect that insurance at once, Mr. McCurdy."

"I will that," promised the other. "I thank you for your kindly interest."

"Let me know when you have collected the money," requested the chief, as he left, and McCurdy assured him he would do so.

For a week he heard nothing. Then, impatient of delay, he again called up the insurance office and inquired whether Douglas McCurdy had put in a claim for the insurance.

"He has," was the answer, "but we have just advised him to-day that we cannot pay the claim without more substantial proof of his brother's death than what the records show. The undertaker who buried him, as you know, is now in prison, and Dr. Conway, who attended McCurdy in his last illness, is also in prison, having been found guilty of substituting the body of an unknown person for Robert Nixon, who was not dead at all. Under those circumstances, we cannot consistently pay the claim without better proof than the certificates of those gentlemen. Affidavits of friends would be all right, and we have so advised Mr. McCurdy."

"I see," said the chief, "and I don't blame you one bit for your precaution. I, myself, have had suspicions about McCurdy's death all these years. I suppose it's too late to prove anything by the body. It must have been reduced to dust long ago."

"Nothing can be expected in that direction," agreed the insurance official. "Only the unqualified affidavits of friends who actually saw the body and recognized it as the body of Abner McCurdy and who can testify to those facts if it became necessary."

The chief dropped in on McCurdy unexpectedly the following day.

"What's the good news?" he greeted. "Get that insurance money yet?"

McCurdy had a long face.

"Look at this, chief," he answered, handing over a letter he had received from the insurance company.

Chief Pellington read it as though he had not previously been apprised of its having been sent.

"Quite the proper thing to do," he supported the tenor of the letter. "No doubt you can furnish any number of affidavits along the lines suggested."

"Unfortunately, I cannot," regretted McCurdy, "and if you will recall the circumstances of my brother's death you will understand why."

The chief wrinkled up his forehead as he mentally tried to span the decade of years.

"By George!" he cried after a few moments' cogitation. "It was some terrible contagious disease, wasn't it—cholera, or something like that?"

"Yellow fever," corrected McCurdy. "The only one who saw him besides myself was Dr. Conway. The undertaker came and he was buried right off without any ceremony."

The whole situation came back to the chief in a flash.

"Conway certified to the cause of death," pursued McCurdy eagerly, "and Jake Burtell buried him, two unfortunate men to have, in view of what has come to light regarding them, but those are the facts nevertheless."

Had the chief reached an *impasse?*

"Looks like you're up a stump," he remarked, "but don't give up hope. I'll try to think of some way out. You're entitled to that money."

It was better, he argued, to pretend that he was looking out for the interests of Douglas McCurdy than to antagonize him by showing that any suspicion attached to him.

"Oh, so far as that goes, I don't care about the money so much," McCurdy hastened to point out, "only I hate to have the least suspicion cast against either Conway or Burtell, even if they are in prison now. They were straight in those days, I'm sure, whatever they have done since."

"How about yourself?" questioned the chief significantly. "It's you, McCurdy, upon whom any suspicion in the matter is mostly cast, for you have benefited by your brother's wealth. You inherited practically all his property."

"Why, you don't mean to insinuate, chief, that I——"

"Now, Mr. McCurdy, please don't get alarmed," mollified the chief. "I'm not insinuating anything. In the absence of tangible evidence, I can only suggest possibilities. It's up to you yourself, man, to clear your name of any possible suspicion. My own impression is and has always been that there were peculiar circumstances connected with your brother's death. And now, since Conway and Burtell are serving terms in prison for dishonest and criminal practices in connection with their professions, it seems that it is all the more important to remove any doubt surrounding another case in which these two men happened to be interested."

"That sounds reasonable enough," admitted McCurdy, "but I have done all I can do. If you have any suggestions to make I'll be glad to follow them."

"Nothing has occurred to me yet," said the chief. "But the fact of the matter is, McCurdy, I'm not going to drop the thing where it is now, and I want you to assist me in every way possible."

"And here's my hand on it," offered McCurdy readily. They shook hands and parted.

"I'm going to have your brother's body disinterred," he told McCurdy a few days later.

"What good will that do?" expostulated McCurdy. "Nothing will be found but dust and bones."

"I don't care for the dust and bones," argued the chief. "The bones may prove to be all important, however, provided the skeleton is intact."

The next day the chief gave orders to exhume what remained of the body of Abner McCurdy. Nothing was found but the skeleton and a handful of ashes. Douglas McCurdy had come out to the cemetery rather reluctantly it seemed to Chief Pellington.

"Here, let me have that tape measure," requested the chief to one of his men. Taking the tape measure and stooping down, he measured the skeleton.

"Five feet eight inches," he jotted down the length of the skeleton on a memorandum pad. "What was the height of Abner McCurdy as given in that insurance application?" he asked of Dr. Wilson, the city physician, who was present.

"Five feet eight and a half inches," read the doctor from the application.

"H'm!" mused the chief, "not much difference there. The hair might account for the half-inch difference."

The doctor was bending over examining the skeleton carefully. At length he stood up, a perplexed look on his face.

"Find anything worth while?" interrogated the chief hopefully.

"I don't know," considered the doctor. "Was this Abner McCurdy lame?"

"No," answered the chief, "at least he did not walk lame, so far as my recollection goes. Mr. McCurdy," he turned to the dead man's brother, "you know better than any one else whether——"

"Why, of course, he wasn't lame," chorused two or three bystanders, old friends of the McCurdy family, particularly of Abner, whom the chief had made it a point to be present at the examination. "He was as sound physically as any one here except Douglas."

Douglas McCurdy walked with a decided limp.

"Queer," observed the doctor thoughtfully. "This man was undoubtedly lame in life. You can see for yourself, gentlemen. It is quite evident that a portion of the tibia or shin bone and of the fibula of the right leg was removed through some sort of an operation in this man's lifetime and he could not possibly have walked without limping a little. You can see that there is at least a half-inch difference in the length of that leg as compared with the other."

Every one was intensely interested and bent over the skeleton as the doctor pointed out the disparity in the length of the legs and explained the meaning of the few scientific words used by him.

"If what you say is true," declared the chief impressively, "and our eyes cannot be deceived, this is not the skeleton of Abner McCurdy at all."

"Whose is it, then?" asked Douglas McCurdy anxiously.

"And where is Abner McCurdy?" queried one of Abner's friends.

The chief shrugged his shoulders.

"You know as much as I do, gentlemen," he answered. "I think we have shown beyond a doubt that the man who was supposed to have been buried as Abner McCurdy in reality was not he at all."

"Can you offer any explanations?" he turned suddenly on Douglas McCurdy.

"I?" exclaimed McCurdy, startled. "Why, no, only that I have always supposed my brother was buried here."

That night the chief managed to get into McCurdy's house surreptitiously, and to hide himself underneath McCurdy's bed. In his room, when he fancied he was alone, McCurdy did not limp at all, but walked as perfectly as the chief himself. Pellington, confident that now was the time to act, came forth from his hiding-place, revolver in hand.

"Abner McCurdy, I believe!" he astonished McCurdy by greeting. "You get over that game leg pretty nicely when you're by yourself. And now if you'll just remove that mustache." He reached over and yanked a false mus-

tache from McCurdy's face—the counterpart of a mustache worn by Douglas McCurdy in life.

Abner McCurdy stood before him. He remembered the man despite the ten years that had elapsed. All those years he had posed as his twin brother, Douglas McCurdy, the man who had really died, wearing the false mustache because Douglas had worn a mustache, and limping to affect his brother's lameness.

"I'm glad it's over," Abner McCurdy confessed, when he found that it was useless to hold out any longer. "Chief, this thing has been hanging over my head for ten years. I have never felt certain but what any day I might be discovered. You can imagine my state of mind in all that time."

"But why did you do it?" asked the chief. "That's the thing's been puzzling me. You were wealthy; Douglas was not. Why did you kill him?"

"Kill him, chief!" exclaimed McCurdy, horrified. "Kill my brother! I didn't kill him!"

The man was so earnest in his protestations that the chief could not find it in his heart to doubt his word.

"Then he actually died of yellow fever?"

"Yes, and I pretended it was I who had died, and impersonated him, seeing no harm in it, because—well, because I was in love with the girl to whom Douglas was engaged, and knew she would not have me as Abner, although we could be hardly told apart, since she had previously rejected me. Douglas wore a mustache, you may remember, so as to enable people to distinguish between us more readily. As you probably know—as every one knows—she eloped with another on the eve of the date set for our wedding. Once having impersonated Douglas, however, I had to continue the deception and——"

"Did Conway and Burtell know of your impersonation?" asked the chief.

"Yes, in a weak moment I gave each one of them five thousand dollars as a starter as hush money, and they have been hounding and bleeding me ever since. I was relieved when they were sent to prison in the Nixon affair. I thank God the agony is over. But, chief, I have committed no crime save that of impersonation, if that's a crime. That's why I never claimed the insurance, not until you scared me into putting in a claim for it. Of course, I'll drop that now."

Chief Pellington felt sorry for the man. In all conscience, McCurdy had suffered enough by his deception.

"It's lucky for you, Abner," he said, touched by his dejected appearance, "that Burtell and Conway are now serving long terms for another crime, because I would have to do my duty in this case otherwise. As it is, you must suffer alone. Your penalty is to continue to live as Douglas McCurdy, as you have for the past ten years, knowing now, however, that there is one other in the city who knows your secret."

"That's punishment enough, God knows," signed McCurdy, "but it can't be helped, chief, even if you were inclined to be more lenient with me."

A startling detective story is now being prepared for No. 28. Do not miss reading it.

CURIOUS PAVEMENTS

TOMBSTONES are not infrequently employed in different parts of England for paving purposes. Some four or five years ago the inhabitants of Belvoir bitterly protested against the use of such material in the construction of a road leading to the parish church, despite the assurances of the local authorities that with the liberal supply of old and broken gravestones at their disposal, the plan had been adopted with a view to saving the taxpayers quite a sum.

Louis XIV, it is said, paved one of the courts at Versailles with squares of silver, each of which had recorded upon it some triumph of the French arms. In the center of the court stood a large tablet of gold in representation of the luxurious monarch's favorite emblem, the sun. Memoirs of the time of Louis make mention of a lodge erected in honor of Louise de la Valliere. The approach was paved with mirrors, whereon was painted an allegory setting forth the undying devotion of Louis.

An eccentric nobleman of Milan conceived the idea of paving the courtyard of his palace with slabs of marble, granite and other stone, each stone from a different land.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, By Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Critenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall

No.
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, By Charles F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, By Redfield Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler
21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert
22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon.
26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, By Pauline Carrington Bouve

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CHIMMIE FADDEN'S POKER PARTY

By EDWARD W. TOWNSEND

"SAY, dat Mr. Paul ain't so worse, 'cept when he says t'ings solem like de judge in de Tombs what don't mean notting. Lemme tell you: de odder night he was over to our house, and him and Mr. Burton and his Whiskers was sitting into a small game, and I was doing me best t' keep 'em from dying from t'irst. One time Mr. Paul had a hand dat kept his Whiskers and Mr. Burton guessing at ten per for a long time, when his Whiskers said he t'ought he'd stop along outside till de next deal, 'cause he had a sore t'roat and was 'fraid he couldn't keep tune wid de chorus.

"Den Mr. Burton said he'd stop along inside a little more, so as Mr. Paul wouldn't get lonesome, and he histed him. Say, Mr. Paul he looked solemner and solemner, and he says: 'Burton,' says he, 'why is my hand like a empty small bottle?' histing Mr. Burton just one harder when he said it.

"Mr. Burton he only seen de hist, and he says, 'why is your hand like a empty small bottle?' Mr. Paul showed down four sixes to Mr. Burton's king-queen full, and he says, ''cause it's a bad t'ing t' see if you ain't got all you need.'

"His Whiskers he laughed like he'd tole a joke hisself, and Mr. Burton he coughed and says t' me, 'Chames,' says he, 'Chames, fetch anodder bot. "You needn't mind wedder it is a full one or not, 'cause Paul can fill anyt'ing t'-night—even a bottle, I guess.'

"Now, what t' 'ell? I couldn't tumble t' what kind of a song and dance dey was giving each odder. Do yuse?

"Well, poker has struck our house up t' de limit. Near every night de Duchess and Perkins, de butler, me and Maggie, de housemaid, sits into a penny-ante snap, and if we don't quit pretty soon de Duchess will be dragging down de wages of de whole gang. Perky, he mostly has a amatoor juglette on board, 'cause de cook truns him down when he tries t' get gay wid her; Maggie is Irish and bluffs when she gets mad, what Mr. Paul says he would bust de Bank of England; and I never has no sand in me game, 'cause I knows if I do win de Duchess would make me cough up, so dat goil has us all where she wants us before de game is over.

"Say, I wonder de Duchess ain't got corns on her chin from de way she holds her cards; and wedder she has a straight wid holes at bote ends and de middle, or is nursing four aces, she has such a frozen face it would give a polar bear de chills just t' look at her. She's one of dose kind of poker players what pertends never t' know de rules of de game, and screams murder if you don't change de rules t' suit de kind of hands she's getting.

"But she don't beslong t' de cold feet gang. She never wants t' quit wedder t'ings is coming her way or not. She's dead game sport, all right, but I did get a rise outer her de odder night what made her so mad she couldn't talk English for an hour. We was playing wid de same old kind of luck, and all de chips on de table was stacked up in front of de Duchess like a row of chimbleys, when de bell rings and we knowed dat Miss Fannie was going t' bed, and so the Duchess had t' chase. When she had went Maggie kicked 'bout de icy eye de Duchess always had, and Perky said it was like playing wid a nickel-in-de-slot machine t' play wid her, so I says dat, just t' show 'em dat de Duchess has real blood in her body, what could boil as hard as anybody's, I'd put up a cold deck on her.

"I fixed 'em smooth as silk. It was Perky's deal, and when de Duchess had came back Perky he made a bluff at shuffling, and I gives de deck de double cut, and Perky deals.

"Honest, we was all piping off de Duchess, but when she took up her hand she didn't even bat a eyelash, dough we all knowed dat she was looking at four kings pat. Well, Perky trun down his hand and says, 'Cards?' and de Duchess she cops her hand like she was trying t' count a four flush and wasn't dead sure it was dere, and den says, easy as Mr. Paul truns a pint in his face, 'One, silvoo please.' Maggie says, 'I'll take two, Perky,' and I stood pat.

"Well, we chipped along for a while, ten cents each trow, and den I stopped out and Maggie says, 'Let's raise de limit,' and de Duchess says, radder dan make trouble she'd stand a quarter limit. Dose two goils kept histing each odder till all de money and chips was up, and Maggie took off a dinky pin from her dress and called it a dollar. Dey histed till dat was sunk, and Maggie put up her watch and two rings she had, what was presents from Miss Fannie, agin de Duchess' watch.

"Maggie called for a show down, and de Duchess spread out her four gents like dey was easy money.

"Maggie was as red as fire when she flashed her four bull's-eyes, but even den de Duchess never turned a hair, but only says, 'Stake me for anodder deal, Chames.'

"I staked her, and den Perky and Maggie couldn't hold in no more and laughed fit t' kill deirselfs. Maggie pushed back de chips and boodle and watch t' de Duchess and gives de snap away.

"Say, de Duchess give me one look and den she let out at me t' beat 'ell, only it was all in dat forn French langwudge what I only cops a little of, so I couldn't just tell how bad a laying out she was giving me. I guess it was bad enough. Den she turns on Maggie, and Maggie goes back at her, and I never heard such beautiful Bow'ry since I uster live dere. Next Perkins chipped in, and he talks dat English what you can't cop, and pretty soon wese was all going it like a hurry-call amb'lance, me de only one what was talking straight American, and just den his Whiskers come in and ast was de house afire.

"Maggie was so quick wid trowing her apron over de table dat his Whiskers didn't see de chips and cards, so I told him wese was just having a meeting of de Debating Society for de purpose of 'cussing de Raines Bill.

"His Whiskers says that if we couldn't 'cuss de bill widout so much noise, he'd discharge every one of us, which is what he says nearly onct a week, but we never is discharged.

"Mr. Paul had looked in de room and had copped some

poker chips and cards what had fell on de floor, and he called me outside and ast what was de real trouble. I told him 'bout de jolly on de Duchess and he says, talking t' me on de dead level, 'Chames,' he says, 'you has made a bad break.'

"'What t' 'ell?' I says.

"'I wants t' see you and de Duchess always get along smood togedder,' says he.

"'Sure,' says I.

"'Well, den,' says he—dese is de very words he said—'never make de mistake of putting up a game on de Duchess what will make her look like thirty cents'—no, dat wasn't de words—'what will make her look redic'lous in de presence of anodder woman.'

"So I says, 'wot t' 'ell?' 'cause I wasn't on.

"Den he says, 'what t' 'ell is dis? Maggie is young and pretty.'

"'Sure,' says I, 'I uster be sweet on Maggie meself.'

"'Worse and worse,' says Mr. Paul, t'rowing up bote hands. 'De Duchess didn't kick at losing her whole pile, but because you made a show of her before anodder woman. De worst of it is dat de odder woman is young and pretty, and uster be your sweetheart.'

"Den I begins t' tumble, and Mr. Paul says, 'If you likes a woman, and wants her t' like you, you must play her just de same as you must play poker, bearing dese t'ree t'ings in mind: Play de dead level, never mistake your neighbor's chips for your own, and never try t' fill your hand from de discard.'

"Say, ain't Mr. Paul a wonder? Sure!"

Charles F. Oursler is the author of our next feature story. You all know how interesting his stories are.

RIVERS DISAPPEAR IN MYSTERIOUS MANNER

IT is not an unusual thing in Arizona or New Mexico, or the arid portions of territories close to the eastern slope of the Rockies, to encounter a stream which, after flowing in the legitimate manner for several miles, will disappear in the sand, sometimes gradually, at others with startling rapidity.

The water simply subsides in the sand, which is very light and porous. Where it goes is another question. Perhaps to feed some vast subterranean lake, or perhaps to emerge again in the form of springs and artesian wells.

But these are not subterranean rivers in the strict sense of the term, because they may flow underground and then again they may not.

Of the subterranean rivers of importance we have quite an extended list. The most remarkable one is in the Mammoth Cave, in Kentucky. This stream flows between banks about thirty feet apart and is said to average forty feet in depth. It comes very mysteriously from a bank and disappears quite as mysteriously in a bank of fine sand.

In Europe subterranean rivers are not by any means uncommon. The Lys, on its entrance into Belgium, dashes abruptly over a precipice and is lost to sight for nearly half a mile.

The Meuse also has a subterranean course, extending to a distance of six miles, while the River Dromme, in Normandy, on nearing the sea, plunges into a hole thirty-nine feet wide, known as the Pit of Soucy, from which it never reappears, except in the form of a few springs which are supposed to arise from the lost waters.

In Derbyshire, England, there are two small streams called the Hamps and the Manifold. Formed by the union of several small springs, they flow in the open for a short distance and then turn in close together under the face of a hill range.

Here they have made for themselves a passage through the solid earth, and for miles they flow underground, each maintaining its own complete individuality, until at length they re-emerge to the light by apertures only fifty yards apart.

That their waters never intermingle is proved by this experiment—that any floating body thrown in where the rivers enter the underground passage again reappears in the separate river into which it has been thrown when the strange streams of water issue into the light of day.

A somewhat similar condition of affairs is said to exist about a little Cornish lake called Dozmere, or Dosmary Pool. It has neither visible outlet nor inlet, but articles thrown into the lake will reappear in Falmouth harbor, which is at least sixty miles away.

No doubt that many such streams disappear and come up under the bed of the ocean.

Sometimes the conditions are reversed, and the river, instead of disappearing before it reaches the sea, comes from the sea and disappears in the land. On the coast of Cephalonia the sea runs into the land in a strong stream, turning a water wheel on its way, and disappears in the earth about 100 yards from the entrance. These sea-fed rivers are also found in Mexico, where they are known as "zanates."

"While passing through Yucatan in 1870," says a traveler, "I saw a large river running with torrential speed within a natural tunnel not far from the seashore and probably over 100 feet below the surface of the ocean. Its shaft-like entrance was adorned by a picturesque old Spanish well curb of stone, furnished with standards of fancifully wrought ironwork.

"Nothing on the surface indicated the existence of the vast cavern under the monotonous and flat lowlands of the peninsula of Yucatan, and, though not a breath of air stirred, the deafening roar of the torrent under our feet could not be perceived until we were fully inside the cavern.

A rapid descent brought us to the level of the pumps used for irrigating a very extensive plantation, and from here we could see by the light of our torches the yellow foam of the waters upon the undefined background of the chasm below.

"Descending still further, the full stream could be seen through a wide fissure in the limestone of the cave. It had the rounded appearance of a stream flowing horizontally under great pressure, 10 or 12 feet in diameter, and looking like a gigantic black icicle lying on its side.

"The large volume of water plunged with great swiftness into an unexplored and dark chamber with a terrific roar, producing noises which resembled the hollow echoes of heavy explosions heard now and then above the perpetual rumbling of the rushing water. The mouth or entrance of the zanate was only 28 feet above the level of the Gulf of Mexico, and as my barometer indicated a descent of 140 feet, it meant that the river was flowing 112 feet below the level of the sea.

EASTERN SNAKE CHARMERS

By AN OLD TRAVELER

THAT the snake-charmers of antiquity possessed a secret mode of fascinating serpents, which has passed down to their successors of the present day, both in Egypt and India, there seems to be reasonable doubt. Certain authorities declare that the various tricks with serpents performed by the Indian jugglers, however terrible in appearance, are by no means as dangerous as they seem, inasmuch as the jugglers always take the precaution to deprive the snakes of their fangs and the poison glands, which lie beneath the tooth, in which the venom is contained. It is certain, however, that the fangs and poison vessels are not always removed, and that in some manner, whether by the influence of music or otherwise, the Indian jugglers have the power of attracting the venomous serpents which swarm in the hot climates of the East.

The snakes usually selected by the musicians, whose profession it is to exhibit their power over these reptiles, are of the species known in Europe by the name of cobra di capella, or "hooded snake," the most deadly of the serpent brood. They are carried about in baskets, and the exhibitors, like the little avoyards with hand-organ and monkey, earn a subsistence by their performances. They play a few simple notes on the flute with which the reptiles appear to be greatly delighted. As the music proceeds they keep time by a graceful motion of the head, rising in coils from the ground, and following the notes they love with gentle waves, like the undulations of a swan's neck. With the cessation of the music they relapse into a sort of lethargy, and appear motionless, but must immediately be covered up in a basket to prevent their springing on the spectators. Forbes, the celebrated writer on India, one day devoted an hour to the painting of a fine cobra de capella which was kept dancing the whole time upon a table. Not doubting that its venomous fangs had been previously extracted, he frequently ventured to handle it while admiring the beauty of its spots, and more particularly the spectacles of its head, from which it derives the name sometimes given it of "spectacled cobra." The next day his Mohammedan servant, going to the bazaar, observed the same musician amusing a number of simple country people with his dancing snakes. As was usual on such occasions, they formed a circle around him and sat down on the ground. Suddenly the tremendous reptile, irritated either at the music's stopping too abruptly or from some other unknown cause, darted among the spectators and, fastening on the throat of a young woman, inflicted a wound of which she died in agony in half an hour. The same musicians who exhibit these performances likewise charm all kinds of serpents, even the huge boa-constrictor, from houses and gardens where they lie in wait to spring upon the inmates.

The Hindu juggler performs various tricks with serpents. Being invited to come to your house and give an exhibition of his skill, he produces a bag, which he first permits you to examine, and then throws, apparently empty, upon the floor. He mutters some mysterious words and charms, with various gesticulations, when the bag begins to be agitated from within, and after a few upheavals of the sackcloth, out crawls a full-grown cobra, five or six feet in length, which, rearing itself up and erecting its hood, looks through its spectacles as much like the devil as possible. At the bidding of the juggler the snake again returns to the bag, which, after being agitated for a short space, appears again to be empty, and upon examination the snake is found to have disappeared. The writer himself has seen this trick performed, with feelings of no very agreeable sort, nor altogether free from serious apprehensions as to his own safety. In Hindustan serpents are regarded as genii, or guardian angels, and are often invoked under the endearing appellations of father, mother, or brother. The ancients thought that there was something divine in these reptiles, and the cobra makes a conspicuous appearance in Hindu temples.

The poison of all serpents is much of the same chemical constitution. The danger from snake-bite varies directly as the dose of the poison, and the larger the snake the more dangerous the bite. The rattlesnake bite is rarely fatal. The cobra is more so, not because it possesses a stronger poison, but because of its larger size and the speed with which it accumulates poison in hot climates. The poison of the bee or wasp is very powerful; people have died from the infliction of a great many stings at once. It may, perhaps, be supposed to be quite as deadly a poison as that of the snake, since so microscopic a quantity as a single bee is armed with can produce such painful effects. Snake poison kills by annihilating in some unknown way the source of nervous force, reaching the nerve centers through the circulation. If the poison enters a large vein life may be destroyed in a few seconds Absorption takes place so rapidly that it was formerly supposed of some of the more active poisons that they acted by the transmission of a shock through the nervous system, and it is by no means certain that such may not be the case. After a person is bitten by a venomous snake there is an immediate and copious effusion of blood along the fang track, violent pain in the part bitten, and hemorrhage of black venomous blood, the latter being probably nature's method of getting rid of the poison. These symptoms are sometimes accompanied by vomiting. An effect is also produced upon the blood which is not altogether understood. The red corpuscles are destroyed, and the blood becomes fluid and refuses to coagulate. When a person is mortally bitten by the cobra di capella, molecules of living "germinal" matter are thrown into the circulation, and speedily grow into cells, and as rapidly multiply, so that in a few hours, millions upon millions are produced at the expense, as is supposed, of the oxygen absorbed into the blood during inspiration. Hence the gradual approach of coldness, sleepiness, and death. This germinal matter feeds upon the fibrine and oxygen in the blood, which thus becomes disorganized, and nothing is found after death but dark fluid blood, the fluidity indicating its loss of fibrine and the dark color its want of oxygen.

Certain individuals among the Indians pretend to possess the power of curing the bite of venomous serpents by a method peculiar to themselves, and which they will not impart. By these means it is stated, upon the best au-

thority, that many natives have been recovered from a desperate state after being wounded by the cobra without being touched by the physician who performed the cure or taking any medicine internally. This science, if there is anything in it, is little short of the miraculous, and seems to have no affinity with that of the ancient Psylli or modern snake-charmers, but rather with that professed by Mesmer and his disciples. Savages in various parts of the world are familiar with certain vegetable poisons, and are said to possess knowledge of antidotes for snake bites.

But, despite the wonderful stories of travels and explorers, it is not to be conceived that ignorant savages should have arrived at results which all our knowledge of chemistry and botany has been unable to attain. There is no known antidote for snake poison. It is vulgarly supposed that whisky is an antidote, but it is merely efficacious to support temporarily the nerve force. Men have been known to die who were bitten by snakes when dead drunk.

Snake catchers say that harmless snakes suffer from the bite of poisonous reptiles, but that poisonous serpents are unable to harm themselves or each other with their poison. It is, indeed, quite certain, and has been proved repeatedly by scientific experiment, that the poison of the cobra is powerless to injure one of its own species, or any other venomous serpent. A great number of experiments were tried by Doctor Fayrer upon dogs, fowls, and rabbits, by applying the cobra fangs, or those of other venomous serpents, and watching carefully the effects produced. A ligature being fastened around the leg of the animal, so as to entirely strangulate it, and check the circulation completely, the cobra is made to fasten his fangs upon the limb. Despite all the remedies known to science, and notwithstanding the ligature, enough of the virus makes its way through the strangulated tissues to the heart to cause death inevitably within a period varying from fifteen minutes to an hour. In the case of the fowl or rabbit its action is quicker, inasmuch as the rapidity with which a poison acts varies directly as the rapidity of the circulation. A small amount of prussic acid injected into the jugular vein of a horse will cause death in ten seconds, while a rabbit will give up the ghost in five—just the time it takes the blood to pass from the jugular vein to the carotid artery. The effect of a snake bit upon fish has also been tried with fatal effect. The only methods known of counteracting the effects of a snake bite are by ligature and cauterization, assisted by alcohol to sustain the vitality and nervous force.

The great enemies of the cobra, krait, and other poisonous serpents in India are the snake-eating cranes and the peacock. The latter will fearlessly swallow a cobra of the largest size, just as the cobra in its turn can swallow whole another monster scarcely less in size than himself, for these fearful animals possess the virtue of preying upon one another.

TOOLS NAMED AFTER ANIMALS

"HAVE you ever thought of the peculiarities encountered in the names of various mechanical appliances and tools, and noted how many were named for some animal, or have names compounded with the common terms applied to members of the animal or bird kingdoms?" asks C. Forest Crocker, in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*. A great many things coming into daily use for the first time are frequently named for their resemblance to some more familiar thing, and it would appear as if our forebears were constantly ready to use the names of the living creatures about them to describe the new creation. To-day a Latin or a Greek term seems to suit the fancy of those to whom it is given to bring into existence some new device or invention.

Numerous cases may be due to chance and some of the articles so named at present at least bear no resemblance whatever to the creature in whose honor they were named.

In gearing we have the term worm, which in a detached way does resemble the sinuosities of this much-despised creature, and both move slowly as a rule, it is true. Our common term pig, applied to a mass of cast metal, is known to have been originated from the likeness to a razor-back hog. And from the nature of its manufacture the sow, which is afterward broken up into little pigs, receives its name very correctly. The carpenter's horse was a natural term, presumably due to the fact that it has four legs, though the name of any other quadruped would have been as descriptive. Perhaps the fact that it is easily straddled, as the kaiser has demonstrated, led up to this.

The name caterpillar-tread is obvious enough to any one who has seen the little creatures and the huge ones that were used on the tanks did very much damage to the cause of the Hun. Dog-cart doubtless came of the fact that the carts thus named were small and hauled by dogs, but the cart of to-day is characterized and defined by the two transverse seats. In the name cow-catcher we have a very natural development, as the cow evidently caused the pioneer railroader much trouble and annoyance. It has been said that the expression horse-power was used to express the work done by the first mechanical constructions, and was an approximation in terms of what the ordinary horse could do, though it has been shown that few horses could do what the term represents.

The goose has several namesakes, in the tailor's iron, the goosewing, a sail of some kind, and a gooseneck, either a term used in navigation or in mechanics. Some of the better known appliances not having very great resemblance to the creatures for which they are named are bullwheel, bucksaw, catboat, lagdog, lathedog, hogrod, grizzly, frog, cathead, catblock, hogshead, monkey-boat and crowbar.

Others with which most people are familiar are the donkey-engine, the monkey-wrench and the crane, which in its original form did have a resemblance to the long-necked and long-legged bird, but which loses its likeness in the traveling-crane. The mule, a spinning machine; the monkey, a part of the blast furnace equipment; the spider, the central supporting part of the electrical machines, and the crab, which is another name for a winch, are devices not so well known to most people. The salamander, which is a mass of iron accumulated under the bosh of a blast furnace, is very seldom heard of. A butterfly valve may have some of the likeness of a butterfly, but I do not think I ever would have thought of it myself. I cannot refrain from mentioning the fly-wheel, but I am afraid the origin of the "fly" is only too evident, and carries out a different idea.

THE TELL-TALE PAPER

By AN EX-DETECTIVE

"CLARK," said the superintendent one morning last summer, "I want you to start for R—— at once, and begin work on a murder case. I have just received information that Mrs. Osborne, a wealthy widow who lives in that place, was found dead in her bed this morning—she had been murdered. The sum of five thousand dollars, which she drew from the bank yesterday, is missing. Here is a list of the stolen bills which I have obtained from the bank. The case is likely to be interesting as well as remunerative."

Ten minutes later I was on board the train on my way to R——, a village within twenty miles of the city.

Arrived at that place, I was met at the depot by four of the residents who had taken the matter in hand, and from them I learned the following particulars:

Mrs. Osborne lived in a cottage about half a mile from the depot, in a rather secluded spot.

Though quite wealthy, her mode of living was very simple.

She kept only one servant, a young girl, the daughter of a poorer neighbor.

This girl went home every evening, so that Mrs. Osborne was alone in the house all night.

On the day previous she had visited New York, and drawn from the bank the sum of five thousand dollars, which she intended to use in the purchase of a farm on the following day.

Mr. Reynolds, the owner of the farm in question, who lived about three miles from the village, had appointed the following day to call at the widow's cottage to receive his money and deliver up the deed.

On the night of the murder, Mrs. Osborne had the five thousand dollars in the house; this fact was known to a number of persons in the village.

At about one o'clock on the morning of my visit to the place, Dr. Wilson, the village physician, was returning from a midnight visit to a patient, and on passing Mrs. Osborne's house was alarmed by the sight of a tongue of flame shooting from an open window.

This immediately increased to a blaze.

The doctor rushed up to the house.

The door stood open.

He entered and soon succeeded in extinguishing the fire, which had not yet gained much headway.

On lighting a lamp which he found upon the table he was horrified to discover that the carpet and all the various articles of furniture were saturated with kerosene oil.

The fire had been the work of an incendiary.

What was his motive?

A suspicion of the truth occurred to the doctor.

Seizing the lamp, he rushed upstairs and entered Mrs. Osborne's room.

Here a horrible sight met his gaze.

The occupant of the cottage lay upon her couch, dead.

Every article in this room was also saturated with kerosene.

The murderer had attempted to burn the house in order to conceal the evidence of his frightful crime, and make it appear that the unfortunate lady had died an accidental death.

The doctor lost no time in arousing the neighbors, and in instituting a search for the murderer, a search which was fruitless.

The five thousand dollars had disappeared, and there seemed to be no doubt that this money had been the object of the crime.

These particulars I learned from the excited citizens on our way to the scene.

Arrived at the cottage, I first made an examination of the body and of the room in which it lay, but without discovering any clue.

I then descended to the lower apartment—the one in which the fire had started—accompanied by the four gentlemen, who watched my every movement closely, evidently without much hope of witnessing any success.

I could see that they thought they had gone over the ground pretty thoroughly themselves before my arrival, and did not believe that there could be any clue on the premises without their having discovered it.

During my survey of the apartment, I observed, lying under a chair, a piece of crumbled paper.

I picked it up.

It was half of a newspaper.

"Gentlemen," I said, turning to my companions, "I will ask you to direct me to the village post-office."

They stared at each other, evidently wondering what my object in making this request could possibly be.

"It's about five minutes' walk down the road," replied one of them, indicating the direction with his hand.

"I believe I will visit it. You may expect me back directly," and I started off without further ceremony, leaving the four in a state of great surprise.

The fact is I had noticed that the paper which I had picked up was stained with kerosene oil and with blood.

From its appearance it was evident that the murderer had used it to wipe his hands on, and had afterwards rolled it up and thrown it under the chair, supposing, of course, that it would be consumed.

But it had been preserved, and might be the cause of his conviction of the crime.

The paper was a half of the San Francisco *Call*.

This journal, published in a city thousands of miles distant, could not have many subscribers in this village, and I thought it very possible that I might learn to whom it had been sent from the village postmaster, through whose hands it had probably passed.

I had no difficulty in finding the post-office, which was situated in a country store, of course, the proprietor of the store being the postmaster.

I entered, and found that the only occupant was an old gentleman, evidently the owner.

I made a trifling purchase, and then remarked with assumed carelessness:

"By the way, I wonder if there is any one in this place who is likely to have a copy of a recent issue of any San Francisco paper. I am anxious to refer to one."

"Oh, yes," said the old man, "there are two persons in the village who subscribe for the San Francisco *Call*. One of 'em is a young man named Healy, who works in the machine shop yonder, and the other is John Reynolds, who lives about three miles up the road. Either of them would let you have a copy, I guess."

A few carefully worded inquiries elicited considerable information from the loquacious old postmaster.

I learned that Healy was a young man who bore a rather bad character.

He was dissipated, and had been involved in several very questionable transactions.

Reynolds, on the contrary, had an excellent reputation, except that he was considered rather penurious.

He was a wealthy land-owner, and was, in fact, the very individual to whom Mrs. Osborne was to have paid the five thousand dollars of which she had been robbed.

At first sight it certainly seemed more reasonable to suspect the former than the latter, but I determined to reserve my decision on this point until I had secured some further proof of the guilt of one or the other of the two men.

Returning to the cottage I continued my search.

I visited every part of the house, making the minutest examination of those rooms which had evidently been visited by the murderer.

The last place I searched was the cellar, where the criminal had been to procure the can of oil with which he had saturated the house.

To this apartment I was accompanied by the four gentlemen.

After half an hour's search I found, thrust under a large pile of wood in one corner of the cellar, the clue for which I had been looking.

It was a long, narrow-bladed knife.

"Reynolds' knife!" exclaimed two of my companions in unison as their eyes rested upon the weapon.

"What do you say, gentlemen?" I asked.

"That knife belongs to Mr. Reynolds, the man from whom Mrs. Osborne was to have bought the farm to-day."

"Are you sure?" I inquired. "Remember, much may depend upon your identification of this weapon."

"Well," said one of the gentlemen hesitatingly, "I wouldn't want to swear that it was Reynolds' knife. I know he had one exactly like it, for I have often seen it in his hands, but I can't be sure that this is the identical one."

"I can soon settle that question," remarked his companion, "for I happened to be in Jones' store one morning about six months ago when Reynolds bought the knife. I remember that among the lot that Jones showed him there was one that had a slight defect in the handle. Reynolds took that one because he got it a little cheaper on account of its being damaged. Let me see that knife a moment, if you please, Mr. Clark."

I handed it to him.

He examined it an instant, and then said:

"Yes, sir, this is the knife beyond the possibility of a doubt. See, here is the defect I spoke of."

A few minutes later I was on my way to Mr. Reynolds' residence, accompanied by one of the four gentlemen, the others being pledged to entire secrecy until the arrest was made.

In due time we arrived at Reynolds' house.

Our knock was answered by a tall, slender, shabbily dressed man of about fifty.

"Good-morning, Mr. Brown," he said.

"Good-morning, Mr. Reynolds," responded my companion. "Allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Clark."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Clark. Walk in."

We followed him into a dingy, poorly furnished parlor.

"Mr. Reynolds," I said, "I would like to ask you a question."

"Indeed, sir," remarked Reynolds, with evident surprise. "Well, go on."

"I merely want to ask you if this is your property," and I suddenly drew the stained knife from my pocket and held it before his eyes.

His face turned as white as a sheet.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, sinking into a chair.

"I am answered," I said quietly. "Mr. Reynolds, I arrest you in the name of the law."

He made a sudden rush for the door, but I was there before him, and caught him in my arms.

He struggled desperately, but I soon quieted him by slipping a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists.

I then began a search for the stolen money, and in less than five minutes found the five thousand dollars in a drawer in Reynolds' desk.

By comparing the numbers of the larger bills with the list of the stolen bills with which the superintendent had furnished me, I was enabled to identify the money as that of which Mrs. Osborne had been robbed.

A month later Reynolds was tried, convicted and sentenced to death.

Before his execution he made a full and explicit confession of the crime, in which every particular was minutely detailed.

He admitted that his motive was to get Mrs. Osborne's money without parting with his farm.

On going down the cellar for the can of oil, after committing the murder, he discovered that he still held, tightly grasped in his hand, the knife with which he committed the deed. He immediately thrust it into the woodpile, little imagining how soon it would appear as witness against him.

SACRED CATS BRING $15 A TON

A QUESTION frequently asked, but never satisfactorily answered, is whether the human race is more utilitarian to-day than it was some thousands of years ago.

Men have been traders ever since they learned how to shake hands. The task of earning a living has never been easy, for the majority. The past has not appeared to be a period of light labor, but most people look upon any period in the past as less devoted to the spirit of gain than the present.

Not long ago, according to a writer in the *Journal of Heredity*, several hundred thousand cat mummies were found in Egypt. Each mummy was as carefully embalmed as if it had been a human being instead of a cat. Here was evidence that the worshippers of the great Egyptian cat goddess, Pasht, devoted more than one hour a week to religion. Part of the time they cultivated the banks of the Nile, and the rest of the time they embalmed sacred cats.

But what did the modern inhabitants of Egypt do when they discovered this mummy menagerie! They sold the cats for fertilizer at $15 a ton. Think of it! Fifteen dollars a ton for the sacred cats of Pasht! It is a sacrilege, but it is typical of a world whose boots are blacked by the lineal descendants of Homer.

THE PELICAN

By JOHN P. ROBINSON

IN compounding and concocting an article for this magazine, one must not attempt to be guided by the conventional, colloquial and customary; but, above all things, he must be accurate as a curate.

As for me, being hampered by nothing but my native jargon plus the ability to read Morse telegraphy, I am often obliged, by the common weal, to rise and give my seat to one who can roll forth better words, better sentences; bigger, better, busier words. For this writing for the public is very largely a matter of which words one uses. If you can only pick out the proper words, you can surely sell your "stuff" to any good editor; and the same words that may be read at random in the unabridged dictionary, if strung together properly, may be sold for as much as eight or ten cents apiece. Think of that. It's as much as eggs are worth. Think of getting a fresh egg every time you write a common English word. You could just write "Dodgammit" and have a couple of eggs and some bread for breakfast.

However, as before remarked, one should ever be accurate. So upon being told to write a piece about the pelican, I modestly endeavored to hoist the job on another cub-reporter aged forty, who hails from Indiana, because of his long legs, and the habit his Adam's apple has of drooping like a pelican's pouch. It seemed to me to be fitting. That peculiar pouch with which nature has endowed the pelican as a food storage receptacle, and of which the picture-postal poet gushingly writes:

> A gaw'jus bird is the pelican,
> Whose face can hold more than his bellican.
> He can there hold 'enuff food,
> To feed a whole brood,
> Though I don't just see how the helican.

The pelican is found in several of our Southern States, even all winter, but never migrates North in the summer.

The true pelican is a son of the sunny South, like the alligator. Like the 'gator he delights in water, and will sit in the sun and bake for hours at a time, and he can beat the 'gator standing on one leg. To stand for hours and hours on one lean shank is the favorite pastime posture of the pelican. For hours he will thus pose, and appear to be engaged in deep, somber thought, and with the exception of the owl, is the only bird that ever seems to be bothered with cogitation. Unlike the squawking poll-parrot, who tells all he knows in less than two minutes, the pelican "saws wood and says nothing." He will get a toe-hold on a bunch of swamp grass and stand there in the water for hours, and think, think, think, why nature ever brought him into the world on a pair of stilts. He never can seem to comprehend why nature built him two stories high, for he is principally, like some twelve-year-old girls I have seen, all drumsticks. If I were ever at a banquet where the chief *piece de resistance*, if that's the right French for it, was baked and stuffed pelican, I should never pass my plate and ask for a leg, please, for I know there would be no darned meat on it.

To paraphrase Kipling, a pelican is a leg and a bone and a bunch of feathers. Fact is, when you see a pelican standing in the swamp with one leg drawn up, he puts you in mind of a big feather duster stuck in the mud, feather side up. Like the poodle-dogs they use up North for cleaning windows, by simply tying them to a long pole and sousing them in a tub of water, the pelican if caught and dried and his gizzards drawn, would make an equally good feather duster. And then some folks say that Dame Nature don't ever joke. Look at the pelican. It is to laugh.

However, unlike the kangaroo, the pelican does not keep her young in this pouch, but, instead, fish. If you happen to see a tall pelican wagging his head from side to side as if saying very determinedly, "No," it's two to one it's just a fish he's got in his pouch, wiggling around; and at this critical moment the pelican knows enough to keep his mouth shut. With a pouch full of fish, the father pelican can sometimes hardly stagger homeward, which makes it appear he has a jag on. And if he starts to fly the weight is apt to turn him bottom side up. Fact is, our aviators got the idea of looping the loop from seeing a pelican homeward bound with more fish than he could lug.

Like the amiable cow, who can go on calmly eating grass for four hours, and retire to some shady spot and from her first stomach softly cough up a cud, chew it fine and swallow it into the second or third stomach, the pelican too can do as well. When Mrs. Pelican says, "Bill, I want something new for dinner to-day, cough up," Bill always coughs up.

P. S.—The botanical editor, who also knows a good deal about entomology and other insects, claims that I have got the descriptions of the pelican and crane somewhat mixed in the foregoing article. I asked him roughly if he was ever at the edge of the Florida Everglades, where I was once, and that shut him up. "Yes," says I, "this is a Florida pelican I'm talking about." However, I trust to the liberality of the readers to kindly overlook any trifling errors of detail, and if any of them should suddenly awaken any fine morning and see a tall bird standing on the ground outside and looking into a second-story window not to get frightened, for it's only a crane—or a pelican—I dunno which.

I will remember the first pelican I ever saw. It was in Florida, and I was talking to a stranger, a Northern weakling who was down here for his health; and together we saw the pelican. I shall insist that it was a pelican whatever the botanical editor claims; and says the Yank:

"Gosh all hemlock, look over there. See that big bird a-coming towards us on a pair of crutches."

We have another comic article by John P. Robinson for our next issue. You will enjoy reading it.

A COAT SLEEVE

The Story of a New York Detective

By G. G. SMALL

CHAPTER II

"WHAT I mean is, has he traveled or been away much during the three years he has lived here in your hotel?"

"I guess not. In fact, I don't remember of his ever being away at all."

"Not at all?"

"Well, I don't remember of his being absent a week at a time during his stay here."

"Then, of course, he did not go so far away as New Orleans during the time?"

"Certainly not. I don't believe he has been further away than Boston or Philadelphia. Indeed, he was one of the greatest home-bodies I ever knew; and my wife always told him that somebody lost a good husband by his remaining a bachelor."

"But he would not have been a bachelor after next September," said I.

"Now, look here. I don't understand that snap at all. Page was on the most intimate terms with both my wife and myself, and he certainly told us more of his private affairs than he did anybody else (and that wasn't much), but he never told us about being engaged to be married."

"And you never heard anything about it from any one else?"

"Not a word until that girl came forward at the inquest and told of it."

"And yet somebody must have known it."

"Why so?"

"Else how could the coroner have summoned her to give her testimony?"

"That's true. Oh, I have heard of his being seen riding out on the Bloomingdale road with a stunning-looking girl, of whom he seemed to be very proud, and my wife often joked him about her. But he was close as a clam on the subject, and would only laugh when she chaffed him in this way."

"But you are certain that he never was in business in New Orleans?"

"Not since I have known him."

"And he never said as much?"

"No; he was generally secretive about his private affairs, but at the same time he often spoke of what business transactions he had in Boston some years ago; and he also told me once of a partner he had in Philadelphia who cheated him in some transaction or other—in relation to some Lake Superior ore, I believe."

"Then he was not wholly secretive?"

"Not to us, at all events, although I never heard of his being so free with others."

"There can be no doubt, then, that he was not in business in New Orleans?" said I.

"He never was, to my knowledge; and if he ever had been, I should judge from the confidence he displayed regarding transactions in Boston and Philadelphia, that he would certainly have said something about it. Why?"

"Nothing, only this Louise Wilbur told me yesterday that she made his acquaintance in New Orleans, and came North for the sake of being where he was."

"How long ago?" he asked, quickly.

"Within a year."

"That's a lie."

"So I see."

"She didn't say that to the coroner's jury. She simply said amid her sobs and tears that she knew him, and that they were engaged to be married; and the coroner was so tender-hearted that he only put a few questions to her, and none of the jurymen had the nerve to cross-examine her."

"No, they never asked her where she made his acquaintance; but I did."

"At New Orleans, within a year?"

"Yes. I asked her how long she had known him, and she said about a year; and I asked her where she made his acquaintance, and she said while living with her parents at New Orleans. She evidently had not read your testimony, in which you state that he had lived at the Merchants' Hotel for the past three years."

"Of course she had not, or she must be a fool. Now, I'll bet you that she is a faker."

"Well, not a first-class one."

"I should say not. I'll bet there is something about that girl and her relations with poor Page which would pay you to look into. I don't say she had anything to do with his murder, or that she knows anything about it; but there is certainly something very strange in what she says about where she made his acquaintance."

"You are right, my dear sir."

"I'll bet a basket of wine that he was never engaged to be married to her. I tell you he was naturally a bachelor, and cared very little indeed for female society."

"But he gave her a magnificent engagement ring."

"He did?"

"Yes. She showed it to me."

"The devil she did? But if she would lie about where she made his acquaintance, she would just as soon lie about the ring and her engagement to him."

"True again."

"What sort of a looking ring is it?"

"A large emerald, with a cross of magnificent diamonds set in it."

"That was his ring. He took it of somebody, a South American, I think, for a debt or advanced money on it—I don't know which. But I have seen him wear it."

"Oh, you have?"

"Certainly. But stop!" said he, striking the table with his fist.

"What is it?"

"I think I saw him have that ring on his finger the day before he was murdered."

"Can that be possible?" I asked.

"I'd almost swear to it. But mother'll know all about it, for she was dead stuck on that ring, and often said it was too pretty for a gentleman to wear. I'll call her," he added, going to another room and returning with his wife, a nice, matronly old lady.

He introduced her to me.

"When did you last see Mr. Page with that big emerald ring on?" he then asked.

"Why, the very morning before he was found murdered. Why?" she asked.

"Nothing, only we were talking about it, and I told him I thought he must have had it on when he was murdered," said the landlord, evidencing that he did not care to have his wife know exactly what we were talking about, and at the same time to give me a nudge in the direction of another root of the mystery.

"Oh, I am sure he had it on, and was robbed of it," said she, emphatically.

"How are you sure of it?" I asked.

"Why, he wore it away in the morning, and he never returned afterwards."

"Are you positive of that?" I insisted.

"Positive! Why, poor, dear man, wasn't I speaking to him as he came down from his room to go to business; for he always went at just such a time, and he was so punctual that I've often known him to start at the same time Sundays, before he'd think what day it was. Well, we stopped and spoke on the stairs. Said I: 'I see you have got your sparkler on to-day.' 'Yes,' said he, 'I may as well wear it as to have it laid by in my trunk'; and then he said: 'I think I shall have to make you a present of that ring some day,' and then went on downstairs; and it was the last time I ever saw him alive. But it was a most beautiful ring, though," she added, just like a woman.

"Well, that's all, Molly," said her husband, indicating that she might go.

"I hope they'll catch the murderers, and recover that beautiful ring," said she, showing some more of the woman, while announcing her sympathy for the murdered man.

With this she left the room, and we were once more alone.

She was a little garrulous, like most women of her age; but she had certainly opened a clear streak through the clouds for me.

"Well, what do you think, now?" asked the landlord.

"I don't think exactly, I know," said I.

"What?"

He was evidently trying to see if I caught on to the idea.

"That Thomas Page wore the ring when he was murdered, and that his murderers robbed him of it."

"Not the slightest doubt of it; but how is it that she has possession of it?"

"That remains to be found out."

"Of course; but doesn't it show that she is somewhat connected with the murder?"

"It certainly looks so."

"I should arrest her at once."

"She will be under lock and key before the shades of night fall on us."

"Good; for if she is innocent, as I do not believe she is, she certainly ought to be made to tell how she got the ring."

"I'll soon fix that. But tell me one more thing if you can. How do you account for Page's being down on that wharf at so late an hour as not to be seen by anybody, or to hear the noise of the struggle, which evidently took place, heard by anybody about?"

"I don't understand it at all."

"No theory?"

"No, unless he was drugged and carried there. But don't lose any time in getting the nippers on that girl."

"I shall not. But keep this closely to yourself, will you?"

"Certainly."

"And your wife?"

"I'll fix her; I'll tell her that you wanted to buy the ring. That's all right."

With this I left him, and took a taxicab, giving orders to the chauffeur to go directly to the house where Miss Wilbur boarded.

Leaning back on the cushions, I resolved the matter in my mind.

The old chief was undoubtedly right, as he nearly always was.

I certainly had seen the ring worn by Thomas Page on the day he was murdered, and of which he was undoubtedly robbed.

But I had found a clue at last, and one that I could follow easily.

Arriving at the house, I told the chauffeur to wait, and going up the front stoop, I rung the bell, perhaps a little sharply, owing to my excitement, and it was quickly answered by the same servant-girl who had admitted me before.

"I wish to see Miss Wilbur," said I.

"Sure, an' she's gone," said the girl.

"Gone!" I exclaimed, instantly overwhelmed at the thought that my bird had flown.

"Yes; she went last night."

"Where?"

"Ther divil tell yer, for I can't."

"Send the landlady to me at once," said I, going into the parlor, while the girl started up-stairs.

"Oh, the confounded luck!" I muttered to myself. "There she sat, there he sat, and I might have nabbed them both, if I had only known what I know now. Oh, what a shame!"

I was almost talking aloud, when the landlady entered the room. She was a typical boarding-house landlady.

"Are you the landlady?" I asked.

"I am," she replied, calmly.

"Miss Wilbur has been boarding with you?"

"Yes."

"The servant says she has gone."

"Yes. Went last night."

"Do you know where she has gone?"

"To Chicago."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Why, of course not. She said she was going there, and that is all I know about it."

She was as calm as a side of sole-leather.

"Did she go alone?"

"Her brother went with her."

"But I thought she had no relations here in New York?"

"Oh, you are the gentleman who called on her yesterday, are you?"

"Yes."

"And you found her in this room with a gentleman, did you not?"

"I did."

"Well, that was her brother."

"Are you sure it was?"

"Why, my dear sir, you seem to be exceedingly inquisitive. One might take you for a detective trying to find a scent. As I told you before, the only means I have of knowing about my boarders is what they say themselves. He has been a frequent visitor here, and she has always called him her brother; that is all I know about it."

"Has she ever had any other gentlemen visitors here?"

"Yes—one, occasionally."

"And who was that?"

"I never heard her mention his name, for she kept herself provokingly close-mouthed, but she insinuated that he was a rich Wall street broker, and that she was engaged to be married to him."

"Did he come often?"

"No—not a quarter so often as the generality of girls would like to see the man they are engaged to be married to."

"As often as once a week?"

"Yes, about once a week on the average, I should say. He used to drive up here with a spanking team and take her out to ride occasionally, but not half often enough."

"How long did she board with you?"

"Been here about two months, I guess. But, tell me, why are you putting all these questions to me? I don't know you, and perhaps I have already told you too much," said she.

"No, you have not. I am very anxious to see her again on a matter of business that concerns me as much as it does her," said I. "How did she leave here?"

"In a carriage."

"With her brother?"

"Yes."

"And her baggage?"

"That was taken away by an express man."

"Before or after she went?"

"Before."

"Did she seem to have a plenty of money?"

"Well, I'm not supposed to know everything about my boarders, if I am a landlady," said she, with some asperity.

"I mean, has she always had plenty of money since she has been with you?"

"Oh, yes, enough to pay her way, at all events, and that was all I wanted."

"One more question. Do you know anything of her moral character?"

"Now you are becoming impertinent, sir."

"I beg pardon, I do not intend to be, but I have good reasons for wishing to know."

"And I have good reasons for not telling you."

"You have?"

"Yes, because I know nothing about it. Before the world, so far as I ever saw or heard, she was lady-like and all right; if she had not been she couldn't have remained in my house," she said decidedly.

"Of course not. I didn't know, however, but that you might have noticed something."

"No; only I've always thought her brother was more attentive to her than her old lover was."

"Did she ever show you her engagement ring?"

"Yes; and it is a beauty. An emerald set with diamonds in the form of a cross. Why, it must have cost two or three thousand dollars."

"When did she first show it to you?"

"About two days ago, I should say."

"But since then her lover has not been here?"

"No. She said he had gone out West on business, and that she was to meet him at Chicago."

There was another bouncing lie.

"Has she ever told you about anything happening him of late?"

"Not a word."

"Do you read the papers?"

"Very seldom. I don't have time."

"And your boarders. Were any of them acquainted with Miss Wilbur?"

"No, I think not. She has always taken her meals in her room, and never came downstairs unless somebody called for her."

"Have you heard of the murder of Mr. Page?"

"No. Who's he?"

"A gentleman. It has been in the papers."

"Oh, well, I never read such things. They shock my nerves. I only read the marriages. Besides, there's a murder nearly every day, and one gets tired of reading about them, and the lazy police who never succeed in finding out the murderers."

"Perhaps you are right," said I, getting up. "Much obliged to you, madam," and placing my hat upon my troubled head, I returned to the waiting taxi.

"Where now?" asked the chauffeur.

"Police Headquarters."

I sat back into the cushions about the sickest detective that ever lived.

My bird had flown, but I had no idea that she had gone to Chicago any more than that Mr. Page had gone to join her there.

What would my chief say?

But knowing him to be just, I did not hesitate to see and tell him all.

"What?" said he, as I entered his private office. "This is not your hour to report."

"I know it, chief, but when you hear what I have got to say, I think you will agree with me that I am right in not keeping it until midnight," said I.

"Possibly you are. Well, I have a little breathing spell just now, so go ahead."

And he leaned back in his big office-chair to listen.

I told him the whole business just as I have told it to you.

For a moment he was thoughtful and silent, then he said:

"Officer, it was my fault, not yours. You should have had that interview at the Merchants' Hotel first. But, good Lord! if you had done so, the fact of the engagement ring would not have come up, and then, of course, you would not have obtained this important clew, for it is an important one—a brighter and sharper one than I ever expected you to get. Indeed, it is superior to the coat-sleeve," said the old chief, with much earnestness.

"I am glad of it, sir; but you must know how chagrined I am at losing the game, just as I thought I had it in my grasp," said I.

"Oh, yes, I understand that, but a real detective never gives up, however discouraged he may get at such misses as this. You have unearthed the mystery in a very short time. This man who passes for the brother of Miss Wilbur is probably her lover, and most undoubtedly the murderer, as I thought at first. They took alarm at your calling there, and he probably cursed her roundly for showing you the ring as she did, and they have fled."

"But not to Chicago, I should say."

"No; or they never would have left the word they did that they were going there. No; they have either

gone in an opposite direction, or they have not left the city at all. I am inclined to believe that they have not left the city; that they are hiding here, probably, with disguises and aliases. But, to make sure of it, I will telegraph to the chiefs of all the large cities, sending a description of them and ask for their arrest. Now, what you want to do is to put in some sharp, fine work in the way of finding them—if in the city. Disguise yourself in some way. I'll show you how, if you do not know. But the very first thing to do is to find the hackman who drove them away from the house; also the expressman who took the trunks. Find where they were taken to, and you will have your birds both together, most undoubtedly. Report at midnight again," he added, and, drawing his office-chair up to his desk, I knew the interview was at an end.

So I saluted and went away.

I certainly felt better after having this interview with my old chief, although, of course, I was still vexed at my mishap.

Well, which way should I turn first?

Talk about looking for a needle in a hay-mow! the idea of finding either the hackman or the expressman among the thousands of them in New York, seemed just about as likely and sensible a thing to do.

But it had to be done.

There was no other way, unless I should happen to stumble upon the people I wanted while walking upon the street, which, you will admit, was not very likely.

But, of course, I naturally concluded that in hiring either a hackman or an expressman, they would not go far away from where their home was.

So I began with the expressman first.

All that day I followed the thing up, and until late into the evening.

But not a trace could I find, and at the appointed hour I reported to Chief Matsell again.

"Nothing yet?" he asked.

"Absolutely nothing," I replied, and told him of the places I had visited.

"All right; keep on. Report whenever you think it necessary, but always at twelve o'clock at night until this case is finished. Go home now; take a good sleep."

I needed it, you may well believe, and it didn't require much effort on my part to obey orders on that occasion.

The next morning I was up again bright and early. I felt refreshed, and went to work with a will.

This time I struck larger game.

I went for the branch offices of such companies as the Adams and American expresses.

But I had to go in the capacity of a detective in order to find out what I wanted, and, showing my authority, I was everywhere treated with the utmost courtesy.

At the branch office of the Adams Express on Broadway I found what I wanted.

One of the drivers had just returned his book and report, and this showed that he had taken three trunks from No. 40 Fourteenth street, Wednesday afternoon, and carried them to the Hudson River depot, where he left them, receiving pay beforehand.

This began to look like business again, but I wanted to see the driver himself to see if I could gather any points.

I saw him an hour later,

But it was a failure.

He had received the order from a strange boy, together with payment for the job, and he took no further notice of the matter, only going to the house for the trunks, receiving them from the servant, and delivering them at the depot.

Of course, I was shut out there, the only thing I learned being that this man, who passed as Miss Wilbur's brother, either he or Miss Wilbur herself had proven themselves very smart by not showing themselves, but sending a boy with the message instead.

But the trunks had gone to the Hudson River depot, and that much looked as though the owner had actually gone to Chicago.

From the express office I went to the depot in the hope that the baggage-master might have a memory of who called to have the trunks checked, and where they were checked to.

But when I saw the mountains of baggage, its continual loading and unloading, my purpose failed me, and my heart also.

How could any mortal remember any particular person or baggage in such a rush, where hundreds of trunks are checked to Chicago and almost every other city in the Union?

No, I saw it was an impossible thing to do, and so without saying a word I retraced my steps, still in the dark.

Of course, my next move was to find the hackman who had taken them to the depot.

But, after all, supposing I did find him, what would he know?

It was not to be thought of for a moment, of course, that his "fares" would tell him where they were going.

So what could I get out of him, even if I did find him?

But I must obey orders.

Chief Matsell had told me to find the hackman, and I was bound to do it if possible.

I went around to all the large livery-stables, making inquiries as to whether they had received an order on Wednesday to take parties from No. 40 Fourteenth street.

This was even harder work than I met with while searching for the expressman.

But I finally found a stable on whose order-book was the very thing I was looking for.

And the driver was there.

I questioned him.

"Yes, I tuck 'em," said he.

"Where to?"

"Ther Hudson River depot."

"Describe them."

He did so minutely.

"Do you know where they were bound for?" I asked.

"I do."

"Oh, you do, eh?"

"I hurd ther man tell ther baggage-master to—well, I hearn him say somethin' about Chycagy."

"Well, did you see or hear anything else?"

"Oi did, sur."

"What was it?"

"I hurd ther man soy ter me, soys he, 'How much is it?' 'Three dollars,' said Oi, an' he war jintleman enough ter give me a dollar extra for mesilf, good cess ter him."

Well, this interview certainly didn't amount to much, although it confirmed me in the belief that the fugitives had really gone to Chicago.

At all events, I considered it of importance enough to report at once to the chief.

It was evening, and he was just going to his dinner.

I met him on the headquarters steps, in company with two police captains.

(To be continued)

CURRENT NEWS

STRANGE MELON COMBINATION

There is on exhibition in Bowling Green, O., a vegetable which would excite the curiosity of Luther Burbank. It is a watermelon with a muskmelon rind and seeds, but watermelon color. It has a pleasing odor, but its taste is like that of a watermelon and muskmelon combined.

OCEAN SALT EXTRAÇTED BY ELECTRICITY

Experiments in Norway with a view to extracting salt from ocean water by means of electricity have been successful, and two salt factories will be started for this purpose in the near future. During the war it has been difficult to get salt from abroad, and sometimes it has been impossible to salt down the fish. The new salt works should greatly improve the situation.

SPOKE SIX WORDS IN ELEVEN YEARS

A man who spoke only six words in eleven years has died in Winchester Workhouse. He was George Montague Hawkins, aged 58, who had no impediment in his speech and whose intellect was normal. His time was spent in walking around the workhouse grounds, maintaining complete silence all the time. When he wished for leave two or three years ago he said, "I want my clothing," and during his last illness he tried to get up, saying to the nurse, "I want." If spoken to, he would simply smile.

TEST DETECTS DYE IN JAM

Some of the jam sold at the present time is dyed to give it an attractive color. Happily, it is easy to find out whether or not the jam has been treated in this way. A simple test is explained by *Popular Science Monthly*.

The first step is to mix a little of the suspected article with some water, then dip into it a piece of clean cotton wool. If the jam has been artificially colored, the stain on the wool will be very difficult to wash out. On the other hand, when the jam is pure, the stain can be rinsed away very easily.

GAR FISH ON MENUS

Salt gar fish, 10,000,000 pounds a year, will go from Louisiana waters throughout the country, according to plans completed by a local fish concern with the approval of John M. Parker, State Food Administrator, New Orleans, La. Mr. Parker has eaten the salt gar fried, baked, stewed and in court boullion and pronounced it excellent, even declaring it more palatable and nourishing than the high-priced codfish. Formerly gar fish were used only for fertilizer and bait for crab nets. It has been announced that salt gar will be cheap.

WAITER HAS $30,000.

It pays to be a waiter—in San Francisco. This was established conclusively when the Superior Court appointed an administrator for the estate of Harry Hastings for years a waiter at the Elks' Club here.

When the Hastings case came up in court it also was shown for the first time by so comparatively few waiters have given up their present jobs to seek more lucrative jobs in the ship-yards, as has been the case in many other trades.

An inventory of Hasting's estate showed that it was worth, at a conservative estimate, $30,000, practically the entire sum being collected through tips.

GLACIER RETREATS

Fifteen years ago a member of the United States Geological Survey mapped the front of the Barry Glacier, which is in the northwest corner of Prince William Sound, Alaska. In 1910 it was found that the front of the glacier had gone back about three miles from the position it occupied in 1899. B. L. Johnson, of the Geological Survey, examined the front of Barry Glacier in the fall of 1914, and determined that the total retreat of the glacier between 1910 and 1914 appeared to be about 8,200 feet, a retreat of four and one-half miles in fifteen years. A short account of the retreat of this glacier includes a sketch map showing the position of the glacier front in seven different years and several reproductions of photographs of the glacier.

LIGHTS THAT TURN THEMSELVES OFF

One of the considerable sources of fuel waste is the unnecessary burning of electric light. A large percentage of lights are used chiefly for limited periods, as for instance in cloak rooms. They are turned on and then heedlessly left burning. Thus we are constantly recommended to shut off needless lights as a matter of national saving.

An invention designed to remedy this condition is the work of L. E. Lewis of New York. By pushing a buttton the light is turned on and glows for a predetermined period—say, five or ten minutes—and then is automatically cut off. The device has been tested and found practical and seems useful in the way of checking electric light waste.

SAVED BY OIL ON WAVES

The experiment on a large scale of smoothing water by means of oil was first made at Peterhead, England, by John Shields thirty-six years ago. A force pump with 1,200 feet of lead and iron pipe was used to throw the oil upon the waves at the harbor's mouth. Although the sea was running high it became smooth as soon as the pump began to "pour oil upon the troubled waters."

On many occasions since then vessels in danger at sea have used oil to smooth the waves with great success. Just a few years ago the efficacy of oil in stilling the billows was again demonstrated when the Uranian liner *Volturno* burned in mid-ocean. When the rescue ships, summoned by wireless, reached the scene the waves were so high that they could not approach the burning vessel. The arrival of a tank steamer, which turned a flood of oil upon the sea, made it possible for lifeboats to come alongside and save many of the large number of passengers and the crew.

FARMER LED TWO LIVES

A search of the farm of Howard White, who was arrested on his premises southwest of Defiance, on the charge of theft, has resulted in the discovery of stolen goods to the value of $2,000.

Among this lot are sheep and different kinds of live stock, farm implements and all manner of things. White, it appears, plied his trade at night, when he would sally forth in an auto, pick up something of value and haul it to his farm. He is said to have worked not only Northwestern Ohio, but even went into the State of Michigan.

NEGRO TURNS WHITE

An aged negro, hotly pursued by three negresses armed with an axe handle and heavy sticks, dashed through the streets of Earle, Ark., the other day. The old negro was handicapped by his age, and the women had given him a sound beating before they were stopped and arrested.

The negresses excused their attack on the ground that the old man is a "hoodoo," and that he has been practising his sorcery on the negroes in the vicinity, causing them all sorts of bad luck.

They loudly announced that they will give the aged one but five days to leave town, under pain of further beating. The negroes' belief that the old man is a "hoodoo" probably arises from his appearance. His skin has turned white except for a streak about the eyes, giving him an uncanny look.

GETTING OF NITROGEN FROM ATMOSPHERE

There has been erected at the United States Department of Agriculture's experiment farm at Arlington, Va., the largest experimental plant in the United States for the production of nitrogen from air. The nitrogen so produced is combined with hydrogen to form ammonia, which can be used in the manufacture of explosives and fertilizers. Experiments with the view of increasing the efficiency of the process are now being conducted by the Bureau of Soils. The Haber process of manufacturing nitrogen is being employed. This process involves the production of ammonia from hydrogen and nitrogen. The two gases are mixed in the proper proportion, put under high pressure and subjected to intense heat. They are then passed over a spongy iron, whereupon a portion of the mixture combines to form ammonia.

PAPER FAMINE IN THE OLD TIMES

There was a paper famine in Europe in the seventh century. In A. D. 640 the Saracens conquered Egypt, and at the same time, by order of Omar, their Caliph, the renowned library at Alexandria, consisting of 400,000 volumes, was burned. The paper supply of the then world was derived from the papyrus bark, a reed which grew only in Egypt. Consequently, when the Saracens gained possession of the country the paper supply was cut off. This led to the adoption of a curious expedient. The writing on used papyrus paper was erased and the paper, which was thus made available, again brought into use. An old author has suggested that probably owing to this many valuable contributions from classic writers, Tacitus, Livy and others, were lost to the world.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Agricultural research in the Virgin Islands is provided for in the appropriations for the U. S. Department of Agriculture, for the current fiscal year. The Danish authorities established an agricultural experiment station near Christiansted, St. Croix, in 1910, which ultimately included a tract of 225 acres. This station is to be taken over by the States Relations Service of the Department of Agriculture and the staff will be increased. Besides continuing experiments on sugar cane, cottton, vegetables, etc., the department is likely to investigate the live stock possibilities of the islands. Dairying is now almost unknown there. The leading crops are sugar cane and Sea Island cotton. An agricultural survey of the islands has been made by D. W. May, in charge of the Porto Rico experimental station.

NEW YORK COMPILES RECORD OF TWELVE THOUSAND BOYS

Assistant Federal State Director Frank A. Rexford, of New York, has compiled a complete record covering the activities of 12,000 Working Reserve Boys who have worked on farms in New York State during the past summer. These records are remarkably comprehensive, showing the location of the farm where each boy worked, the number of acres cultivated by each boy, the amount of stock he cared for, the amount earned, and the kind and value of each crop produced. In addition, the report gives data concerning the health of the boys, living conditions on the farms, and treatment accorded the boys by their employers. The record is of great value from a statistical as well as from a practical working viewpoint. Mr. Rexford's work in this connection sets an example which it would be well for other officials of the Reserve to consider.

DECAYED CITIES OF THE EAST

On the east bank of the Tigris, some twenty miles below Bagdad, stands the remains of Ctesiphon, the scene of a recent battle in Mesopotamia. In ancient times it was one of the greatest of the now dead and buried cities of Chaldea that once flourished along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates.

There is now practically only a large village on the site, but in olden days Ctesiphon was renowned for its splendor, and there the Parthian kings had their magnificent winter residence. Of its past glories some great relics remain, notably the gigantic vaulted hall of the "Throne of Khorsu, sometimes known as Solomon's Porch," though it has nothing to do with Solomon. Near it is the tomb of Mahomet's barber, Sulciman.

During the wars between the Roman and Persian empires, Ctesiphon was a prize well worth contending for, and many a combat was waged for the possession of what, though now only a solitary mound of ruins rising out of the Mesopotamian desert, was once a thriving city. The city's decay dates from the Seventh Century, says the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, when it was plundered by the Arabs, its fall from glory corresponding with the rise to fame of Bagdad and Basra. Its irrigation system, which was the source of its wealth and prosperity, was allowed to fall in ruin, and when the water left, life practically went out of the city. It has always been so in Mesopotamia.

On the other side of the Tigris from Ctesiphon are the extensive ruins of another great city of the past—Seleucia, where the Greeks once held sway over half a million inhabitants. Seleucia was built to drain the life from Babylon, forty miles distant on the Euphrates, and succeeded. In the days of Pliny it was reckoned the most populous and wealthy city of Western Asia, and was for long a stronghold of Greek and Macedonian culture as opposed to that of the Parthians on the other side of the river. It was burned by the Roman Emperor Trajan, and now scarcely a trace of it remains above the desert.

PEAT INSTEAD OF COAL

This product of the partial decomposition of vegetable matter in marshes and bogs has long been used in Europe, especially in such a country as Ireland, where coal deposits are almost unknown. In Europe as a whole, fifteen to twenty million tons of peat are consumed annually. In this country peat has not been used to any great extent. Lack of sufficient capital, the inexperience of the operators and engineering difficulties have stood in the way of the utilization of our vast deposits, while there has been no pressing need to economize coal.

Extensive peat beds are widely distributed over the country. In New England and Florida, around the Great Lakes and on the Pacific Coast there are altogether 11,000 square miles of peat deposits of good quality which could furnish heat and power for the entire country for years. Many of these deposits are in States where coal is accessible only after heavy transportation costs have been incurred. Thus, Minnesota, the climate of which calls for a great deal of fuel that has to be transported from long distances, has six billion tons of peat which could be made available in case of need.

But peat has other uses than as fuel. The variety produced from sphagnum moss has high value as an antiseptic dressing; it can be substituted for medicated cotton.

MOSS USED AS NEW SURGICAL DRESSING

A new surgical dressing which costs nothing in itself, and which is many times more efficacious as a dressing than absorbent cotton, may in large measure supersede the latter. It is called "sphagnum moss," and it grows abundantly in certain parts of the United States, England and Canada, reports the *Illustrated World*.

The American Medical Association suggests that the moss be gathered by school children, or by members of the boy scouts, in patriotic journeys to the places where the moss grows.

The only expense connected with the moss, aside from preparing the dressings, is the gathering of the material.

The most surprising feature of this moss is that it will absorb from twenty to twenty-two times its own weight of water before it begins to drip. The average moss will absorb at least twelve times its own weight. But even the average moss is a better hand at absorbing than absorbent cotton, which does not absorb more than six times its own weight of water.

This use of a natural grown absorbent supplanting that of manufactured absorbent cotton is only one of the many benefits given this country by the war. The growing of digitalis in America was never done until the war forced it, together with some of the other extraordinary recent developments in the chemical industry of the country.

MYSTERY OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND

Even stone walls cannot keep thieves out of a bank. The directors of the Bank of England were once startled to receive an invitation to meet an unknown man in the strong room of the bank at midnight. "You think you is all safe hand you bank his safe, but I knows better. I bin hinside the bank, the last 2 nite hand you nose nuffin about it. But I am nott a theaf so hif yer will meet me in the great square room, with all the moneys, at twelf 2 nite, Ile explain orl to you, let only 2 cum down, and say nuffin to nobody." The strong room was guarded the next night, in spite of a disposition to regard the letter as a hoax, by police, and—nothing occurred. The next phase of the mystery was more astonishing than ever. A heavy chest of papers and securities taken from the strong room arrived at the bank, with a letter complaining that the directors had set the police upon the writer, and that he had therefore not appeared as he promised; but to prove that he was neither a thief nor a fool he sent a chest of papers he had taken from the bank. Let a few gentlemen be alone in the room, and he would join them at midnight, said the writer, and to cut short a long and strange chapter of bank history, a man with a dark-lantern burst into the strong room of the bank at midnight after calling from behind the stone walls for the directors to put out the lights. He was one of a strange class of men who gained a living by searching the sewers at night, and through an opening from a sewer he had found his way into the richest room in the world.

MAGIC MIRRORS

There are mirrors that are totally unlike those found on milady's dressing-case, and not as harmless, either. While they are interesting and amusing at times they are sometimes made use of by swindlers to take the dollars from unsuspecting and credulous mortals. They are known as magic mirrors, and a good deal of ingenuity is expended in their manufacture. They are sold to credulous individuals for $5 and $10, and cost one-tenth those figures. Some of these charlatans, with sublime assurance, have called the law to their aid to protect them from rivals, or it may be to add prestige to their merchandise, as several of the mirrors are, or claim to be, covered by letters patent, copyright or trade-marks.

The mirror makers can justify their calling with precedents numberless. The belief that a bit of bright metal or glass could be so charged by the black art that it would reflect in visible form the invisible things or beings about us is as old as civilization. Egypt and Babylon, Persia and India, Japan and China have made and used these occult instruments from early times. Those which are made in the Far East possess qualities which at one time were puzzling, but which, when the secret was discovered, were found ingenious utilizations of optical laws.

The simplest is the Japanese lucky mirror, a fair model of which the writer saw in a Broadway shop a couple of days ago. This is a flat plate and handle made of a metal resembling steel. One side is so highly burnished that it reflects as well as the best silver-backed looking-glass. The reverse is chased in low relief with figures of vines, birds, clouds and ideographs or talismans. When employed in the usual fashion it does not differ from any ordinary mirror, but when a large beam of light is thrown upon it and reflected upon a dark wall or ceiling, in the reflected circle appears a luminous face, ideograph or other figure. The result is secured in the original welding or casting of the mirror, when a piece of metal of different composition, shaped like the figure it is to produce, is fused into the circumjacent mass.

A similar effect is produced in silvered mirrors by just laying on the reflecting character in one kind of tin-foil and filling in the rest of the surface with a foil of the same appearance, but different reflecting quality. Akin to this style of work are the magic lacquers which at certain oblique angles disclose figures and lines, which are invisible when looked upon at right angles to the lacquer's surface. Oldest of the oriental mirrors are those set at the bottom of a cylinder or truncated cone, whose surface is waved or undulating. The base reflects in ordinary manner, the sides in such a fashion as to produce foci of focal circles at various points. From one point of view the looker sees a faint halo about his face at the bottom of the cylinder; from a second point a misty human face alongside of his own; from a third a face looking at him through his reflected eyes.

USES FLEECE OF TWENTY SHEEP

Somewhere in the long line of supplies needed to maintain an American soldier at the front must stand a flock of twenty sheep. Each of our fighting men require 160 pounds of wool a year, the fleece of a score of the animals. A huge flock of 20,000,000 will be required to make comfortable an army of 1,000,000 men. These figures are given by the United States Bureau of Animal Industry, writes Frank G. Carpenter.

Each soldier, of course, will not require 160 pounds of woolen goods each year, but as two-thirds of the fleece when clipped is dirt and grease, while some of it is not suitable for making cloth, that amount of raw material will be needed. This is the full equipment of a man in active service: One overcoat, two service uniforms, three suits of heavy underwear, two olive-drab shirts, four blankets, two pairs of gloves, with six pairs of light and four pairs of heavy-weight socks.

This increased demand comes at a time of world shortage in wool. In 1910 we produced 321,000,000 pounds of wool; last year, 26,000,000 less, or about enough to make a suit for every third person in the country. Since 1914 the flock of Australia, the great wool producer, has been reduced 12,000,000 by drouth, while thousands of sheep in the warring countries have been slaughtered for food. Vigorous efforts are being made by the Department of Agriculture to increase wool growing in America, which may be aided by its great increase in price. The civilian faces the possibility of shoddy or wool and cotton clothes; the soldier comes first, and the soldier's needs will be filled.

ONE SHOE CONTAINS 60 DIFFERENT ITEMS

What's in a shoe?

Take a factory tag that shows how a shoe is made. Count on it sixty different items of material; also different items of labor. That shows many of the things in a case. And there may be others.

Whence come the materials? When you look at a shoe you see the four corners of the globe pulled together in it.

Begin with the bottom or sole, made from the hide of a Texas steer, tanned in oak from Pennsylvania forests. And the heel is of South American dry hide, tanned in hemlock bark.

It's a kidskin shoe you have? It looks it, although one can never tell for sure these days. The vamp is made of a goat of Brazil. It is tanned with chrome from New Caledonia, is blacked with logwood from Jamaica and is glazed with glass from Austria.

The top is of a kidskin tanned in Nigeria, brought to Peabody and there retanned and finished. The tongue is of sheep leather. The sheep grew in Argentia. The leather linings are of skins of sheep that grew in Australia. The skins were tanned in sumac from Sicilly.

Some of the leather is treated with "fat liquor," an emulsion made of cod oil from Labrador and acids from one of the new American chemical laboratories.

Yet only a few of the things that the tanner used in making the shoe have been mentioned. He also used, in his mystery of tanning, "divi-divi" from the East Indies, valonia from Turkey, myrobolans from India and aigarobilla from the land knows where; salt from Michigan, sawdust from Maine mills, egg yolk from Russia, blood from Chicago and degras from France—and a few other things from a few other countries besides.

WHEAT RAISED ON FARMS HERE

Some fine yields of wheat are being obtained in Suffolk County, N. Y., this year. While the section is not considered much of a grain-growing district, yet several farmers have met with success.

William R. Fanning, of Riverhead, has what he believes to be a record yield for wheat in Suffolk County—a little over 46 bushes to the acre. He has finished threshing and has carefully measured and weighed it.

He finds that he has exactly 116 bushels of good wheat from 2½ acres. No yield like this has ever before been reported it is said, and it is also stated that 46 bushels to the acre is considered unusually good in the great wheat belt of the West.

Many farmers in Suffolk County heeded the call of the government and planted a few acres of wheat, a crop that is hardly ever planted to any extent in this country, it is said, because the farmers can make more money from their acres by planting them to other crops.

Even with a bumper crop of 46 bushels to the acre it is not considered a paying investment because the same acreage could have been made to produce more money in some other crop. But wheat and other grains have been planted more from a feeling of performing a patriotic duty.

The manager of the Farm Bureau is commanded by law to obtain from each thresher the amount of grain he threshes each month, together with the name of the farmer for whom the grain is threshed.

If a farmer owns his own threshing outfit he must also report. In this way the government expects to learn exactly how much wheat there is in the entire country. The data for Suffolk is now being collected.

RECORD HISTORY OF WAR ON BATTLEFIELD

A few years hence, school children studying their histories of the Great War may be curious to know just how the minute details of the battles were assembled. Teachers will find the answer in the historical sections of the various armies and the officers who roam the fields searching for data, rescuing precious incidents from oblivion, gathering the details of chaos into an intelligent story.

It was Canada which first set the example of how to glean history from the rubble of the battlefield. When the United States entered the war its officers who were selected for historical work had the benefit of the experience of the Allies. Photography, sketching and painting have a big share in the task of recording the war, France having set the example for pictorial efficiency with its Mission des Beaux Arts.

Up and down the front among the battalions go special officers giving instructions to battalion headquarters how to write their official war diaries, which are supposed to be accurate chronicles of the doings of the battalion month by month. If a big event occurs the battalions concerned chronicle their part in it, the narrative being signed by the commanding officer. Then the diaries are sent to headquarters where they are filed, tabulated and preserved by the historical sections.

Behind the front line a staff of photographers and moving picture men are constantly at work on incidents which in time will be recorded and shown to the public. There also are the artists with their paint and brushes, getting local color, painting the havoc of war as it is. Reality is what they strive for.

Recently an artist was so anxious to get a glimpse of the actual happenings of a little raid that he went over the top with the troops into a German trench. Another working near the front remained too long in an exposed position, and an inroad of enemy raiders forced him to hurry away from his quarters so quickly that many of his canvases were captured.

LITTLE ADS

Write to Scott & Scott, Inc., Advertising Offices, 144 East 32nd Street, New York City, or 29 East Madison Street, Chicago, for particulars about advertising in this magazine.

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THE OOLOGIST IS THE ONLY PUBLICATION in America devoted to the interest of those making collections of eggs of North American birds. Its columns are filled with advertisements from parties desiring to exchange such specimens, also each issue contains many interesting articles and notes on the birds that the Boy Scout sees in his tramps and camps in the woods. Subscription 50 cts. per year. Sample copy free. Address Oologist, Dept. SS, Lacon, Ill.

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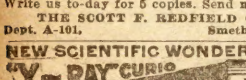

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When you have lost whatever surplus adiposity you desire, it will be easy for you to maintain a graceful, slender figure. By the Korein system persons have reduced from five to sixty pounds, according to their requirements of beauty.

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A booklet is published called "Reduce Weight Happily" which will be mailed free (in plain wrapper) if you write to Korein Company, ND-101, Station F, New York, N. Y. You would do well to obtain this treatise, for it contains much information of value to you—if you are overstout, or if you are gradually becoming so. Correspondence is confidential.

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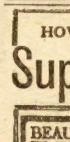

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